THE BOOK OF tea

growing it, making it, drinking it,
the history, recipes and lots more.

Louise Cheadle and Nick Kilby of

teapigs.

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teapigs.

jacqui
small

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Introduction

Welcome to our book about tea. We are Louise Cheadle and Nick Kilby, the founders of teapigs. Hello! It's nice to meet you.

As self-confessed tea nuts, we have always been and will always be mad for anything related to tea. The kettle and the teapot (and more recently the mug) have been part of our lives, so much so that we both have made our living in the world of tea. We've been lucky enough to travel the world and sample all sorts of varieties of tea and, more importantly, experience the deep meaning that tea has in so many contrasting cultures.

In 2006 we took the big step to found a new tea company, teapigs. We're based in the UK where tea is the national drink with a long history. However, we thought it was time to dust down some of the traditions associated with drinking tea and bring it into the 21st century. So, we launched our 'tea temples' (quality whole leaf tea in a convenient pyramid mesh bag) and we haven't looked back since. We love tea; we love its history and origins. But what we love most is its future – a drink that can excite and bring people together worldwide.

In this book, we've tried to capture some of the things that make tea so special to us. We'll take you on a brief tour around the world to highlight just how global this lovely drink really is and the role it plays in many cultures. A brief history (we could have written a few books on the history of tea but that's not our style) helps to put in context why tea has become such a widespread favourite around the world. Then, we'll hold your hand and take you on a journey to meet all the differing styles of tea, show you how they are produced and give you an opportunity to meet some of the people who produce them. Followed by letting you in on the secrets of making the perfect cup of tea, best biscuits to dunk and tea etiquette. Thrown in along the way, you'll find fun facts and we round off with some recipes all involving our favourite beverage.

We hope you like reading this book as much as we've enjoyed writing it.

Nick Louise

Top left: Turkish mint tea; top right: Indian chai wallah; bottom: tea harvest in Darjeeling.

ORGANIC
ICE TEA
with Mint

Clockwise from top left: Fresh, organic iced tea at Borough Market, London; tea plantation in Kerala, India; a happy English tea drinker, circa 1951; a happy Arabian tea drinker.

VANILLA TEA
ROSE
ORANGE
COCONUT TEA
CARDAMOM TEA
BANANA TEA
RASPBERRY TEA
STRAWBERRY TEA
SAFFRON
BLACK TEA
PINEAPPLE TEA
KASHMIRI TEA
GREEN TEA
MIX FRUIT TEA
LEMON TEA
CHOCOLATE TEA
MASALA TEA
MANGO TEA
BEST C.T.C.
TEA
DARJEELING
TEA
CHA YUAN

Clockwise from top left: spice tea market, India; tea for sale Gantok, India; tea for sale Lille, France; rickshaw wallah, Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India.

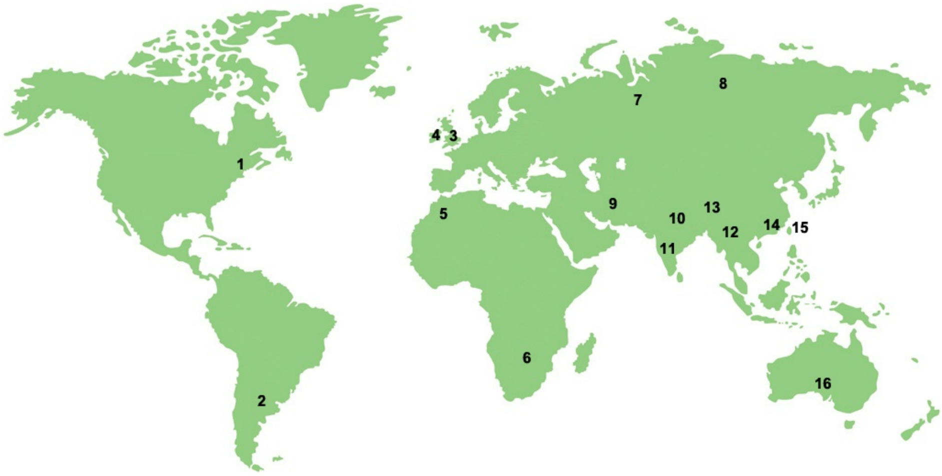
TEA DRINKERS AROUND the WORLD

Chai tea.

A world of tea drinkers

The humble little tea leaf has made quite an impact worldwide. In fact, it's become the second most drunk beverage in the world after, not surprisingly, water. So, forget those fizzy, sugary soft drinks, those beers and wines that'll leave you with a sore head and that other hot, black liquid (which can make you feel all jittery), it's tea that's the planet's real hero.

Tea unites the world, it's drunk to bring people together, to calm us down, to pep us up, to soothe a crisis and to celebrate a reunion. It's drunk out of mugs, cups, glasses and saucers; it's drunk hot or iced, with spices, with sugar, with honey, with fruit, with milk (of all sorts: yak, we hear, is special), without milk, with, well, whatever really takes your fancy. Learning to make tea is like a rite of passage and, of course, only you can make yourself the perfect cup. There are ceremonies the world over to celebrate the making of our favourite drink. Over the following pages we explore some of the customs and traditions of tea drinking worldwide and highlight how this amazing drink has such a deep but diverse cultural following.



1 NEW YORK is believed to be the birthplace of the teabag in 1908 – a tea merchant inadvertently invented it when he wrapped up his tea samples in silk bags to help keep them safe in transit.

2 Yerba mate, an indigenous plant from the Amazon jungle, is the massive favourite hot brew in **ARGENTINA** and URUGUAY.

3 By the mid-18th century, tea had leapfrogged gin to claim the title of **BRITAIN**'s favourite drink.

4 IRELAND may be famed for its beloved Guinness, but its people drink more cups of tea per day than any other nation!

5 Mint tea is a staple of **MOROCCAN** hospitality – if you're ever offered a cup from a local, be sure to accept as refusing is seen as extreme rudeness. Take 5 minutes to sit down, relax and enjoy!

6 In SOUTH AFRICA rooibos (or 'redbush tea'), from the mountainous Cederberg region, is a favourite drink, usually drunk without milk but with lemon or honey.

7 SIBERIA used solid blocks of tea as a currency until the 19th century.

8 Tea in **RUSSIA** is traditionally made in a samovar – a type of urn used to boil water that has a teapot filled with tea concentrate on the top.

9 When in IRAN do as the locals do and pop a sugar cube in your mouth before taking a sip of hot tea – definitely one for anyone with a sweet tooth to try!

10 The beautifully pink brew of noon chai is extremely popular in the region of KASHMIR.

11 The tea industry in INDIA employs over 1 million people.

12 In MYANMAR, they have an entirely different way to enjoy tea – they pickle it to create *lahpet*!

13 Butter tea is the drink of choice in TIBET – tea churned with yak's butter and salt may not be to everyone's taste, but it gives just the right amount of energy to cope with life in the Himalayas.

14 HONG KONG offers the amazingly nicknamed 'pantyhose milk tea' – a mixture of black tea and condensed milk that has been passed through a sackcloth bag, which just so happens to look an awful lot like ladies' hosiery! Yum!

15 TAIWAN gave us bubble tea and we are forever grateful!

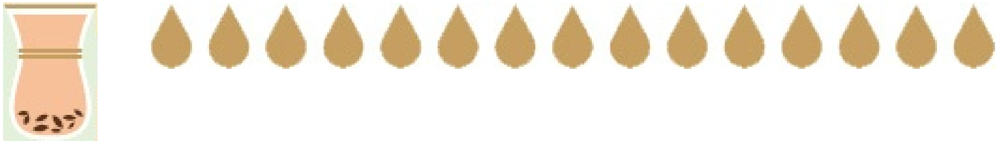
16 In **AUSTRALIA** they 'billy up the fire' to make billy tea, made famous by the swagman in the lyrics to *Waltzing Matilda*.

Who knew?

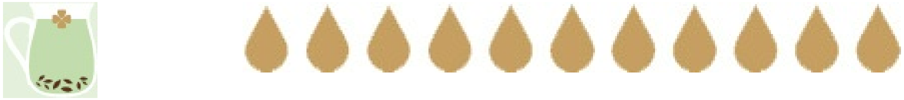
The world over, tea has its name synonymous with the country you're in. It seems that in those countries where tea arrived by ship the words for tea begin with the letter 't' – for instance *tee* (German), *thé* (French) and *té* (Spanish) – while those countries where it arrived overland use words beginning with 'tch' or 'ch' – *çay* (Turkish), *chay* (Russian), *chai* (Arabic and in India) and *po cha* (Tibetan) – from the Mandarin 'cha'.

TOP 20 TEA GUZZLERS

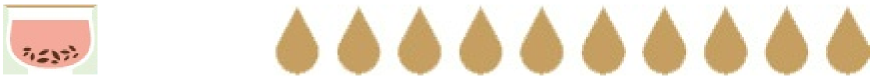
When it comes to knocking back our favourite brew, it's Turkey that comes out on top when measured on how much a person drinks. Basically, that means the Turkish get through more tea per person than any other country in the world. We raise our glasses (of tea, of course) to their good taste.



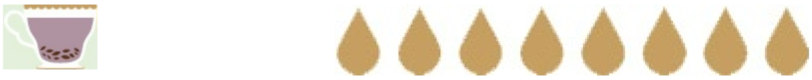
TURKEY
2.937kg/6.48lb



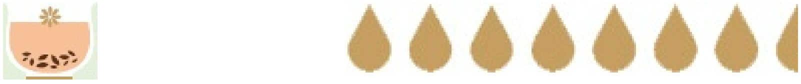
IRELAND
2.151kg/4.74lb



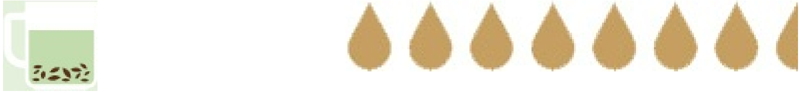
UZBEKISTAN
2.062kg/4.55lb



UNITED KINGDOM
1.661kg/3.66lb



PAKISTAN
1.501kg/3.31lb



KAZAKHSTAN
1.500kg/3.31lb

💧💧💧💧💧💧💧

RUSSIA
1.350kg/2.98lb

💧💧💧💧💧💧

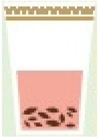
TUNISIA
1.238kg/2.73lb

💧💧💧💧💧💧

MOROCCO
1.170kg/2.58lb

💧💧💧💧💧💧

NEW ZEALAND
1.165kg/2.57lb



💧💧💧💧💧

ALGERIA
1.077kg/2.37lb

💧💧💧💧💧

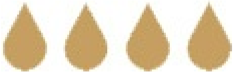
AZERBAIJAN
1.059kg/2.34lb

💧💧💧💧💧

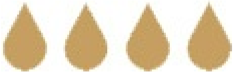
JAPAN
0.978kg/2.16lb

💧💧💧💧💧

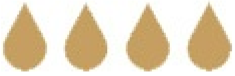
EGYPT
0.965kg/2.13lb



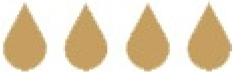
SAUDI ARABIA
0.868kg/1.91lb



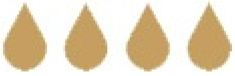
SOUTH AFRICA
0.840kg/1.85lb



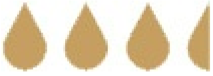
IRAN
0.812kg/1.79lb



POLAND
0.781kg/1.72lb



CHILE
0.751kg/1.66lb



AUSTRALIA
0.711kg/1.57lb

All data from Euromonitor 2013.

TOP 20 TEA DRINKERS

While the Turkish drink the most individually, China comes out as the top tea-drinking nation – consuming the most kg/lb of tea per annum. That means that more tea is drunk in China than in any other country. China does have a bit of an unfair advantage, though, as its population is pretty big.

CHINA
548,043kg/1,216,909lb

INDIA
401,277kg/891,020lb

PAKISTAN
277,808kg/616,862lb

TURKEY
222,747kg/494,601lb

RUSSIA
194,390kg/431,636lb

JAPAN
124,255kg/275,904lb

INDONESIA
112,761kg/250,382lb

UK
105,472kg/234,197lb

EGYPT
80,433kg/178,598lb

USA
73,155kg/162,438lb

IRAN
63,680kg/141,399lb

UZBEKISTAN
60,478kg/134,289lb

GERMANY
57,585kg/127,865lb

ALGERIA
42,999kg/95,478lb

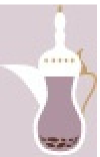
SOUTH AFRICA
41,979kg/93,213lb

MOROCCO
39,190kg/87,020lb

POLAND
30,069kg/66,767lb

BANGLADESH
29,111kg/64,640lb

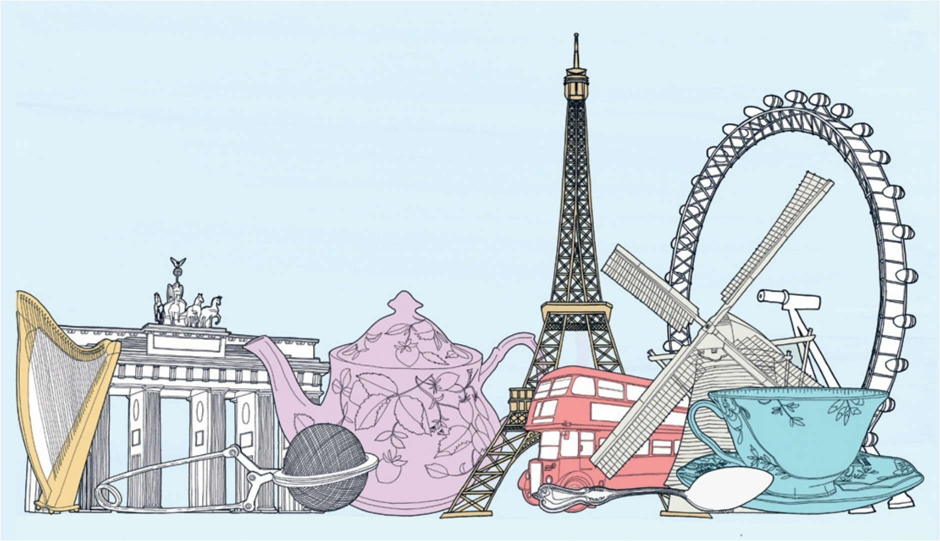
UKRAINE
26,645kg/59,164lb



SAUDI ARABIA
25,507kg/56,637lb

All data from Euromonitor 2013.

Northern Europe



Tea 'hit' Northern Europe way back in the 17th century – just one of the many new and interesting products that were arriving from Asia as a result of the trading routes being opened up by the Dutch and Portuguese. Its influence and popularity gradually spread, mostly among the aristocracy as it commanded a high price. Over time, though, as supply became greater and taxes lower, so the tea-drinking habit spread to a wider audience and became rooted in the culture of certain countries, none more so than in Great Britain.

GREAT BRITAIN

Classic Union Jack tea towel with tin kettle.

So, how do you take your tea? Well, that's a pretty common question in Britain as the population manages to drink its way through 165 million cups of tea everyday. That's an amazing 115,000 cups a minute or nearly 2000 cups a second! Whether they're drinking tea out of a chipped mug with milk and sugar or sipping Earl Grey from the finest bone china tea cup, the British have a relationship with tea that is cemented into its culture. It's the fixer in any situation, the 'social glue' that keeps the country running. Imagine taking tea away from the Brits? The country would come to a standstill; there would be revolution in the air. Nothing to calm down those in a crisis. Nothing to lubricate the throat when gossiping with friends. What would happen to the biscuit industry? What would be said to the vicar when he/she pops around for a chat?

Britain's relationship with tea started in the 1600s (more of that later on, see A tea timeline) when it was seen as a very aristocratic drink. Compare that to today when pretty much everyone in the country enjoys tea in their own personal and special way.

While the traditional cuppa of black tea with milk (and maybe a sugar lump or two) is still by far the most popular way of drinking tea, more and more people are now wetting their lips with more exotic teas. We see green teas, white teas, oolong, lapsang souchong, pu-erh tea, Matcha and single-estate teas. Fruit and herbal teas (not strictly tea as they don't come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant; see also What excatly is tea?) have become popular especially with younger tea drinkers who enjoy the myriad flavour sensations. We also see more interesting ways of drinking tea; freshly brewed iced teas and chai lattes are becoming popular. Bubble tea, a rather strange combination of tea, fruit and tapioca balls can now be found in the 'cooler' places around. So, it appears that the British love affair with tea is still strong and will continue for years to come, even if some of the traditional etiquette may be on the wane. Pinkies out!

Classic cricket tea.

Tea & Toast
FREE FRUIT for Kids

Tea and toast at the Secret Garden Party festival.

TEA LEAVES PREDICT THE FUTURE

The British have certainly fallen in love with the teabag. First commercially introduced by Tetley in 1953, the teabag now completely dominates tea making with 96% of all tea being made from a teabag. One unfortunate result of this has been the demise of the custom of ‘reading the tea leaves’. In the past, most tea was made in a teapot with loose tea. Tea was poured into a cup or mug, without a strainer, and after the tea was drunk (watch out for the leaves) the cup was given a final swirl, resulting in the leaves forming a pattern of some sorts at the bottom of the cup. The ‘diviner’ or tea-leaf reader then got to work attempting to predict the future of the drinker by interpreting the patterns left by the tea leaves. There were even tables produced to help interpret the leaves. Once the reading was done, the leaves were simply rinsed down the drain. A bit like flushing your future away.

METRO
TV giant takes YouTube for $1b

Tea moment in a ‘greasy spoon’ café.

Tea moment at The Ritz, London, UK.

FROM TEASHOPS TO THE TEASMADE

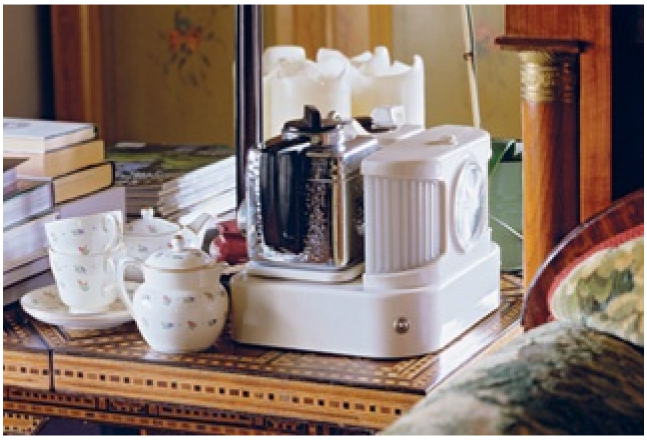
Britain's rich history in tea has led to some very unique tea-related customs:

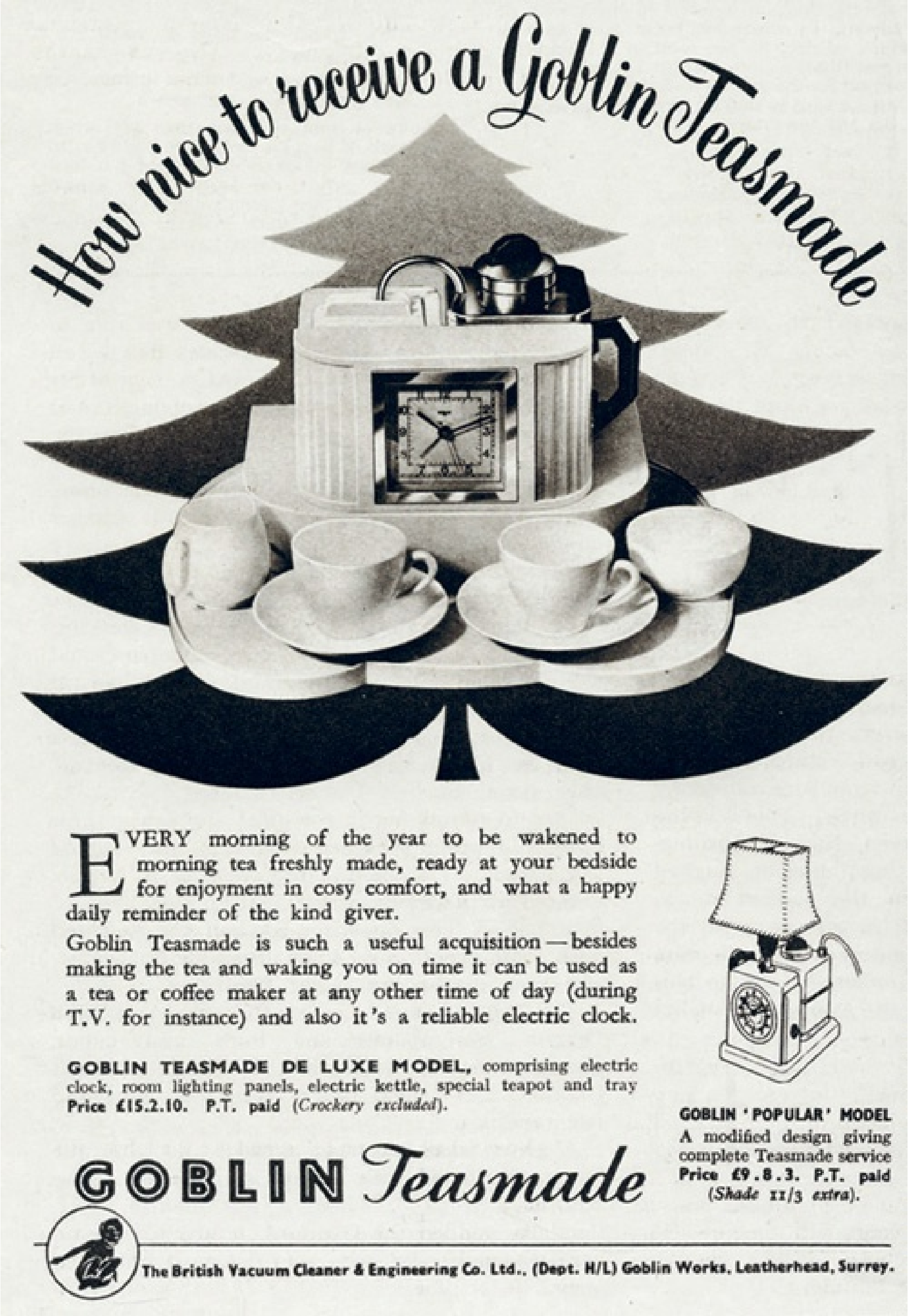
TEA SHOPS

In 1864, the Aerated Bread Company (ABC) started serving tea and snacks to its customers creating in effect Britain's first teashop. What was remarkable about these teashops was that they were the only places at the time where unaccompanied ladies could meet with friends without damaging their reputations. The teashop concept really took off, with ABC teashops spreading across the nation. They were rivalled by J Lyons & Co. who built a nationwide chain of over 250 shops and a smaller number of grander corner houses: larger establishments that contained numerous restaurants with musical entertainment. Changing social and eating habits led to the demise of teashops. Of course, today every high street is inundated by coffee shops. Will we ever see the return of the teashop? We hope so. Let's make it happen!

The Teasmade

In a country where ‘everything stops for tea’ an obvious invention is a machine that will wake you up in the morning with a steaming cuppa by your bedside (the tea’s made, geddit?!). Early patents for such a machine can be traced back to the late 1800s but it was not until the 1930s that commercial machines first started to appear. By the mid-sixties no wedding list was complete without a Teasmade. Numerous makes and models sat on bedside tables across Britain, primed to make a steaming hot cup of tea in conjunction with a wake-up alarm. Before going to bed the lucky recipient would fill the pot with tea, the kettle with water and set the alarm. The timer sets the kettle to boil, the boiling water passes to the pot and the tea brews, the alarm wakes the sweetly dreaming tea lover. All that’s now required is to pour the tea and add milk and sugar, to taste. Genius!





How nice to receive a Goblin Teasmade

EVERY morning of the year to be wakened to morning tea freshly made, ready at your bedside for enjoyment in cosy comfort, and what a happy daily reminder of the kind giver.

Goblin Teasmade is such a useful acquisition — besides making the tea and waking you on time it can be used as a tea or coffee maker at any other time of day (during T.V. for instance) and also it's a reliable electric clock.

GOBLIN TEASMADE DE LUXE MODEL, comprising electric clock, room lighting panels, electric kettle, special teapot and tray **Price £15.2.10. P.T. paid** (*Crockery excluded*).

GOBLIN 'POPULAR' MODEL
A modified design giving complete Teasmade service
Price £9.8.3. P.T. paid
(*Shade* 11/3 *extra*).

GOBLIN *Teasmade*

The British Vacuum Cleaner & Engineering Co. Ltd., (Dept. H/L) Goblin Works, Leatherhead, Surrey.

TEA BREAKS

Long days toiling the land or working in factories would traditionally be broken up by a mid-morning and a mid-afternoon tea break. Despite efforts by industrialists, landowners and clerics, who tried to put a stop to them, the tea break became almost a national institution. The tea break also led to the role of the tea lady, usually the 'unsung hero' of any office who would ensure a supply of tea and biscuits to the workforce, often served from a trolley whose centrepiece would be a huge tea urn for boiling water. Sadly, with the introduction of vending machines and changing working attitudes, the tea lady has almost become part of the folklore of tea history in Britain.

tea dances

Back in the early 1700s a popular form of entertainment were events held in public gardens where people would gather to meet, watch entertainers, dance and drink tea; these places were known as pleasure gardens or tea gardens. Many famous gardens in London, such as those in Vauxhall and Ranelagh, were popular venues for such events. Dancing and drinking tea became fashionable and the tea dance was born. People enjoyed tea dances well into the mid-20th century. But when popular culture changed dramatically in the 1960s, the tea dance declined in popularity; that said, they have made something of a return in recent years as people look to enjoy traditions from the past and discover the joy of dancing and, of course, drinking tea.

ARLY
UEEN

IRELAND

TEA
DEALERS
SINCE 1739
BLENDERS
&c
GUINNESS
FINE
IRISH
EXTRA STOUT

National treasures: Guinness and tea signs for sale in a second-hand shop.

We like the Irish. They take tea seriously, just like us; in fact, tea is on a par with their beloved Guinness. And the Irish should know a thing or two about their brew as they drink more cups of tea per capita than any other country in the world, except Turkey – the average is four cups a day but many people drink six or more (see also Top 20 tea drinkers). However many cups are drunk, though, the recipe for an Irish cup of tea – or 'cupan tae' as it is in Gaelic – is the same: one part milk to two parts tea. And the white stuff has to go in the cup or mug first, not after.

Back in the early 1800s, tea in Ireland was only for the upper class but within 50 years or so, everyone on the Emerald Isle was drinking tea; it was a valuable commodity and was often bartered for eggs and milk in rural areas. That said, the tea on offer was often really poor quality, so, to make this tea more palatable lots of milk and sugar was added to the strongly brewed tea leaves.

Even today, the tea imported, sold and brewed in Ireland is a bold blend drunk as a strong brew. Most Irish teas are strong black blends, predominantly Assam either alone or blended with Ceylon or East African teas (see also Black tea, Indian tea, Sri Lanka and African tea).

Who knew?

Tea first, or milk? The perennial question remains, despite scientific research that has never conclusively come up with an answer. The origins of milk first apparently relate back to the days when hot tea was poured into very fine bone china. Putting milk in first helped prevent the porcelain cups from breaking.

GRAB A TEA.

GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND

Probably one of the most famous and enduring tea traditions associated with Britain is the custom of taking afternoon tea. We have Anna, the 7th Duchess of Bedford, to thank for this treat as she thought up the idea of filling the void between breakfast and dinner by drinking tea late in the afternoon accompanied by a wondrous variety of savoury and sweet snacks. There are all sorts of places to 'take' afternoon tea nowadays; and GB and Ireland has a great variety to keep everyone happy.

THE RITZ HOTEL

150 Piccadilly, London W1J 9BR
www.theritzlondon.com

If you want the full-blown afternoon tea experience and be safe in the knowledge that no one around you is wearing trainers, you'll be glad to hear there are lots of hotels keeping the formal tradition alive. Most famously of all, The Ritz offers a divine afternoon tea every day, complete with pianist, harpist or string quintet! The setting is beyond compare, making it the perfect destination to take visiting relatives, celebrate a special occasion or simply treat yourself to a fancy Wednesday afternoon tea… because, why not?!

BETTYS TEA ROOMS

Six locations around Yorkshire
www.bettys.co.uk

Bettys Tea Rooms offer an all-round classic afternoon tea. With a glowing reputation, thanks to many years of experience, they offer up a fresh pot of tea alongside delightful sandwiches, handmade cakes and fresh scones (with Yorkshire clotted cream!). Each of their six locations is set within a charming historic building.

AQUA SHARD

Level 31 The Shard, 31 St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RY
www.aquashard.co.uk

If you're on a tight deadline and fancy ticking two things off your 'London must-do' list, why not book yourself a table for tea at Aqua Shard? There you can enjoy the finest tea offerings; exquisite food and gaze over London's breathtaking views while being 31 floors up London's tallest building. Tea and sightseeing all in one – perfect!

DRINK, SHOP & DO

9 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX
www.drinkshopdo.com

In recent years more and more establishments have veered away from the traditional image of afternoon tea in a bid to inject life into the British classic. Afternoon tea has become more of an all-round experience, and by doing so has captivated a younger audience. Drink, Shop & Do in London is a classic example of this – at the weekend, they offer an 'afternoon tea and do' session where you can choose either a classic or boozy afternoon tea, alongside the chance to make something to take home with you. Whether you choose a flower headband, hair fascinator, garters or jewellery it's a great chance to get together with your pals, enjoy some tea and get crafty!

LEAF

65–67 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4EZ
www.thisisleaf.co.uk

Leaf offers a far more edgy approach to afternoon tea. Starting out life as a friendly independent teashop with a fab selection of teas, they soon saw a gap in the market and developed into a space where you can also enjoy art, vintage markets, bands as well as putting on regular club nights.

TEA GARDEN

7 Lower Ormond Quay, Dublin 1
www.tea-garden.eu

The Tea Garden is the kind of place you want to find yourself on a rainy afternoon in Dublin. Its cushioned floor, candlelit tables and gorgeously tranquil atmosphere make it the perfect hideaway to shelter from the elements or escape hectic city life. They offer an incredibly broad range of teas to enjoy, as well as a separate menu of loose teas to buy and take home to enjoy. A true hidden gem, and a must for anyone looking for a chilled out vibe complete with stunning tea.

Who knew?

The british are known for dunking biscuits in their tea. Recent research by Dr stuart farrimond concluded that the length of time a biscuit can be dunked is roughly proportional to the amount of fat and sugar in a biscuit. The Rich Tea biscuit was declared the best for dunking.

THE NETHERLANDS

So, it was actually the Dutch we have to thank for bringing the first tea to Europe, in 1610 to be precise, a green tea from Japan. The Dutch East India Company were hugely successful traders and importers of tea throughout the 17th century. The future King of England, Charles II, gained a liking for tea while in exile at The Hague. Sadly for the Dutch their early dominance in trading with Asia gradually declined to the point where it was driven out altogether. But tea is still a popular drink in the numerous coffee shops with a broad range of teas, fruit teas and herbal concoctions widely on offer.

Nowadays, you may associate coffee shops with the Netherlands but you are just as likely to be offered tea. Don’t worry if you order tea and a glass or porcelain beaker of boiling water is brought to your table, it’ll be followed swiftly by a selection box of teabags in all flavours imaginable, so that you can choose and then steep your bag (be it a dusty one or not) to your own liking. But if you are partial to the white stuff in your tea, you’ll have to make a special request as the Dutch tend to drink their tea weak and black.

SWEDEN, NORWAY AND DENMARK

Chaikhanna teashop, Gamla Stan, Stockholm, Sweden.

It's difficult to tell when tea drinking began but it seems that the Vikings drank tea (whether it was out of their helmets or not is another matter). It was likely to be a herbal concoction made from angelica, birch and moss. These days Northern European countries have a predominant culture of coffee drinking, but tea is now really catching on in the numerous coffee shops that can be found in the Nordic countries. Tea, particularly green teas, and herbal infusions are seen as a more relaxing and healthy alternative to coffee. Large 'tins' of tea adorn the walls of many coffee shops and teas are generally served in glasses to show off the lovely colours of the various blends. No milk required.

Who knew?

In Sweden, there is a culture of social coffee breaks known as 'fika' where people stop work or whatever else they're doing to gather to have nibbles and coffee – but tea is always an option! Fika is both a verb and a noun as it's so embedded in their culture.

GRAB A TEA.

AMSTERDAM, COPENHAGEN & BRUSSELS

GREENWOODS

Keizersgracht 465, 1017 DK Amsterdam
www.greenwoods.eu

With its English name, it's not surprising that Greenwoods was created to be the Netherlands capital's first full-on English tearoom, and after its instant success with the locals and tourists alike, it has been something of an institution ever since. They offer a fantastic selection of premium loose-leaf teas from Van Geels & Co as well as a selection of superb Grand Cru loose-leaf teas from De Eenhorn – there really is something for everyone. The tearoom itself is gorgeously designed and carefully furnished to create the most relaxing atmosphere possible. Whether you're popping in to fuel up for a long day of exploring (we say, go for the eggs Benedict!) or to seek a few moments of solace it really is a treasured spot and definitely worth a visit, or two. In fact, you can even rent the apartment upstairs!

FORMOCHA PREMIUM TEA

Brouwersgracht 282, 1013 HG Amsterdam
www.formocha.nl

We can't urge you enough to visit this beautiful establishment located in the heart of Amsterdam – a true tea-lover's paradise! Formocha is the Netherlands' first and only Chinese tea-house and offers an incredible range of carefully chosen speciality loose-leaf Chinese teas. Even on your first visit you are welcomed as though you are a close friend by the charming and knowledgeable owner, warmly invited to sit, relax and enjoy some of the best tea to be found in the city. As far as tea-houses go, Formocha is otherworldly and manages to create such a calming environment it would be easy to while away hours in this tea-centric utopia. If you find yourself wandering the streets of Amsterdam one afternoon then do make a tea stop here.

A. C. PERCH'S TEA MERCHANTS

Kronprinsensgade 5, 1114 Copenhagen K

www.perchs.dk

Tea is trendy in Denmark. For some it might be hard to believe that a tiny, unassuming old-fashioned shop, crammed with every imaginable sort of tea could be so enchanting – but it truly is! The shop is reminiscent of an old apothecary, with jars of loose-leaf tea everywhere you look and enthusiastic staff ready and waiting to measure out your tea of choice on gorgeous brass scales. As if the shop wasn't enough of a visual treat, there is also an adjoining tearoom where you can experience the tea in all its glory as well as indulge in a slice of cake or even one of their high tea options!

DAC& CAFE

Strandgade 27B, 1401 Copenhagen K

www.dac.dk

It won't take you too long to stumble across one of the many tearooms in Copenhagen, but why not head straight for this place – a small café within the Danish Architecture Centre? It may not seem like the most obvious place to stop for tea, but bear with me here! The building itself almost appears out of nowhere and is a welcome refuge for those who have spent hours wandering around the city to find themselves 'the wrong side of the harbour'. But fear not, the café serves a number of great meals as well as lovely individual pots of tea! Be sure to nab yourself a spot in the glass balcony, where you'll have gorgeous views of the city and rejoice in the almost hypnotic task of watching the boats come and go. Plus, on the other side of the harbour are Copenhagen's infamous pavement trampolines – that's hours of fun right there, watching people jump around.

AM SWEET

rue des Chartreux 4, 1000 Brussels

An utterly charming, family-owned tearoom located behind a quaint wooden façade, this Belgian hidden gem in the heart of Brussels is treasured by locals and tourists alike. Here they offer a vast selection of Mariage Frères tea as well as a number of divine cakes and pastries. Whether you're after a quick cup of tea or a place to spend a lovely afternoon, AM Sweet's tearoom provides an incredible cosy and welcoming atmosphere that will make you never want to leave. That said, space is tight, but there are a number of small wooden tables adding to the authentic charm of this place – if you manage to nab one of the cosy sofas upstairs, then you really are one of the lucky few! As if this place wasn't charming enough, the owners even let their gorgeous dog wander freely round the café – all they ask is that you don't feed him treats, but sometimes it is incredibly hard to resist.

PEPPER MINT TEA ROOM

11 rue des Grands Carmes, 1000 Brussels

Located on a beautiful little cobbled side street, this Belgian tearoom offers a wonderful little hideaway for those wishing to escape the hustle and bustle of the Grand Place. It's easy to miss this unassuming shop, but the friendly welcome from the owner and the cosy and familiar atmosphere make it somewhere that's definitely worth a visit. This is the perfect spot to unwind with a brunch, light lunch and a pot of speciality tea from around the world.

GERMANY

PORT OF
DESTINATION
HAMBURG
GERMANY
PORT OF
DESTINATION
HAMBURG
GERMANY
TEA
ASSAM BLATT
DARJEELING

Tea chests, Hamburg, Germany.

Sharing a border with Holland meant that tea was available in Germany not long after arriving on European soil. The first tea was used as a medicinal but within 100 years had become a popular and widespread drink – it even overtook home-brewed beer! Tea in Germany has always been highly valued, twice being subject to prohibition and causing the growth of smuggling and secret tea drinking for Germans to get their fix of the black (or green or white) stuff! Even then, there were tea revolutionaries!

Holland's principal customer for tea in the 17th century was East Frisia, in Northwest Germany. They are massive tea drinkers – in fact, if East Frisia were a country in its own right, its annual tea consumption per capita would be the highest in the world, ahead of China and Ireland! When coffee became really popular throughout Europe and the rest of Germany in the 19th century, East Frisians stuck to tea because it was more economical – tea leaves could be used many times and there's no need for coffee grinders or filters. A little known fact to many is that Hamburg, the principal port in East Frisia, is a major player in the worldwide tea trade with numerous tea companies based there. In fact, Germany re-exports more tea than it consumes; much of the premium teas consumed around the world have likely passed through one of Hamburg's tea importers.

Who knew?

During the Second World War when tea was rationed in Germany, extra 'teekarten' were distributed in the East Frisian region so that the heavy tea drinkers could get their daily tea quota.

The majority of tea drunk in Germany is loose leaf; there are over 2500 specialist teashops across the country selling quality leaf teas from Darjeeling, Assam, Sri Lanka and China. German tea drinkers are discerning and drink teas of a particularly high quality due in part to the high tax of over 4 Deutschmarks a kilo applied to purchasing tea after the Second World War, regardless of the quality. This meant that better-quality teas proportionally became better value. Prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, tea was subsidised in East Germany in part of a bartering arrangement. Post-unification, the subsidy stopped and sadly tea consumption in this part of Germany has declined due to the hike in prices.

Back to East Frisia, in this neck of the woods there is a unique way of making and drinking tea (a kind of tea ceremony). Each cup of this special tea has three layers – the sugar (is the land), the tea (is the sea) and the cream (is the sky or cloud) – and there's no stirring allowed.

HOW TO MAKE: A tea cloud

1. **Make a strong brew of Assam tea.**
2. **Put a lump of sugar in a smallish cup or glass (the size of an espresso cup if you have one) and pour over some tea, being sure to leave room for the next layer of cream.**
3. **Now, pour the cream onto the back of a spoon resting on the edge of the cup so it sits as a layer on top – a little will mushroom downwards into the tea and give you the 'tea cloud'.**
4. **Sip – you'll get a hit of the sugar and the cream helps to lighten this strong tea.**

GRAB A TEA.

GERMANY

Tea is so popular in East Frisia (or Ostfriesland, as the Germans know it) that there are two museums dedicated to tea that you can visit.

BÜNTING TEEMUSEUM
Brunnenstraße 33, 26789 Leer
www.buenting-teemuseum.de
In Lower East Frisia check out the tea museum in Leer where you can learn about the 400-year history of tea in this region and celebrate the local tea ceremony. Do as the locals do and say *prost tee* – cheers to tea!

OSTFRIESISCHES TEEMUSEUM
Am Markt 36, 26506 Norden
www.teemuseum.de
The second wonderful museum of tea lies in North East Frisia in Norden.

CHINESISCHES HAUS IM PARK SANSSOUCI
Am Grünen Gitter, 14469 Potsdam
www.spsg.de/schloesser-gaerten/objekt/chinesisches-haus
In complete contrast to the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel, and rather unusual it has to be said, is the Chinese Tea-house Yu Garden in Potsdam – it’s an exact copy of an original Chinese tea-house from Shanghai all adorned with gold but is situated in the beautiful setting of the Sanssouci Park. It was built back in the mid-18th century but still prompts open mouths today. Take a stroll around this tranquil park followed by a stop at this perfect place for a cup of tea.

MEßMER MOMENTUM
Am Kaiserkai 10 20457 Hamburg
www.messmer.de/messmermomentum

In the heart of the ‘tea district’ of Hamburg is the Meßmer Momentum, another shrine to tea where you can browse exhibits, learn from experts and enjoy a relaxed cup of tea from their extensive menu while relaxing in the comfortable tea lounge.

VIER JAHRESZEITEN HOTEL

Inner Alster lake Neuer Jungfernstieg 9-14 D-20354 Hamburg
www.fairmont.com/vier-jahreszeiten-hamburg

And while you’re in Hamburg, be sure to visit the very grand Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel – it is probably the best place to take an afternoon tea in its super-luxurious and spectacular surroundings overlooking the lake.

FRANCE

Hand-made jugs, cups and mugs at the Astier de Villatte boutique along rue Saint-Honoré, Paris, France.

In France, the story of tea is similar to that in Great Britain, due to similar trade routes and the onset of globalisation. But there is a significant difference. As in Britain, tea was introduced to France as a luxury and was enjoyed by aristocrats. In the 19th century, the Anglophile trend of 'taking tea' spread across France and was soon enjoyed by anyone who was seen to be well off – soon there were more *salons de thé* in France than in England. But, it seems the French never took tea at home – it was enjoyed only by the wealthy or as a special event.

Nowadays, taking tea in France comes with all sorts of wondrous pastries, macarons and tartes, and these smart spaces allow a welcome escape from the hustle and bustle of modern life. The French favour tea of the highest quality (no 'ifs' or 'buts' or 'maybes'), with a delicate taste and they don't often take milk. What's more, there is a growing popularity for the terroirs of teas, as with wines, and for marrying teas with certain foods. And seeing as the French know a thing or two about both, it seems a tea revolution is happening already.

Tea in France has long been recognised for its medicinal properties – King Louis XIV was prescribed tea for his digestion and as a preventative against gout. The French, particularly in the Alpine regions and Provence, also have a great tradition for 'tisanes' or herbal infusions with medicinal properties.

> **"Great love affairs start with champagne and end with tisane."**
>
> Honoré de Balzac, *French novelist and playwright*

GRAB A TEA.

FRANCE

MARIAGE FRÈRES
13 rue des Grands-Augustins, 75006 Paris
www.mariagefreres.com

This historic French tea company has roots dating back to the 19th century when the company was formed in 1854 by the two brothers Henri and Edouard Mariage. There are now a number of *salons de thé* and emporia across France and worldwide selling a huge range of teas and tea paraphernalia. They also serve an extensive menu of tea and tea-related foods in a unique, tranquil and refined setting. Sample the *douceurs du thé* (tea delights); our favourite iconic cake being the *carré d'or* – dark-chocolate sponge flavoured with tea and salted caramel, decorated with edible gold leaf and served with a redcurrant coulis.

LADURÉE
75 avenue des Champs-Elysées, 75008 Paris
www.laduree.com

If in Paris, another must-stop for eats and tea is Ladurée, famed since 1862 for its macarons. Various locations across Paris but we like their flagship *salon.*

DAME CAKES – SALON DE THÉ
70 rue Saint Romain, 76000 Rouen
www.damecakes.fr

The beautifully ornate doors give your welcome an awesome surrounding from the start. This *salon de thé* is a double-decker of a place but not with any hustle and bustle, no. Here is a quiet, almost serene atmosphere where the Mariage Frères teas and home-made delights, both sweet and savoury, are there to transport you from the everyday humdrum. Head upstairs for the best view of the Notre Dame Cathedral. And if you can't get enough of the financiers or madeleines, then they have a takeaway service. Result!

CAMILI BOOKS & TEA
155 rue de la Carreterie, 84000 Avignon

www.camili-booksandtea.com
This tearoom is also a second-hand English bookshop. Step inside to find a table for tea and while away an hour while reading your new favourite book. Choose from a wide selection of teas and some top-notch cakes. During the summer months, head out to the gem of an outdoor patio for an al fresco iced tea. They also run English/French conversation groups every Friday – do you need to brush up on *votre français*?

THE VILLA EPHRUSSI DE ROTHSCHILD

06230 St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat
www.villa-ephrussi.com
Just a 6-mile (10-km) drive from Nice or Monaco, make a detour to take tea in the icing-pink Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild. This exquisite Venetian villa has a tearoom with a view to die for – the Bay of Villefranche. Whether you want to sit and soak in the view while sipping on your tea or dash in for a quick pastry and a cuppa, you won't be disappointed. The gardens are jaw-droppingly beautiful, too.

AQUARELLE CAFÉ

16 Bis Avenue Alfred Borriglione, 06100 Nice
www.aquarelle-cafe.com
If you have a sweet tooth then check out this cupcake haven, that does a good range of global teas. It's a bright and uplifting place with unusual and quirkily named cupcakes.

Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia

As in Northern Europe, tea was also introduced to these regions in the 17th century but, in contrast to Northern Europe, tea arrived via land, specifically via the famous Silk Road caravans. The similarities of tea drinking in this region are the sharing of the tea-drinking moment and the process of making tea using a samovar.

EASTERN EUROPE

Tea
ČAJOVNA

Exterior of a traditional tea-house in Prague's old town.

It seems that in the history of tea Eastern European countries were somewhat squeezed out, as strong tea cultures developed east in Russia through the Silk Road caravans and in Western Europe through the establishment of trading routes by sea. Tea arrived somewhat later in Eastern Europe. In fact, in the Czech Republic it is said that tea didn't arrive until in 1848 when Mikhail Bakunin, the famous Russian anarchist, asked for tea in a Prague coffee-house and was met by bewildered looks. Fortunately, Mikhail was also a mean tea maker and had bought some of his beloved tea with him, which he prepared for himself and the locals. Tea drinking took off with gusto and tea-houses or *cajovny* sprung up throughout the city with over 150 trading at the outbreak of the First World War. Sadly, these died away during the Communist era; although there has more recently been a resurgence of *cajovny* where teas from around the world are drunk in a relaxed, convivial atmosphere.

Poland is a nation of big tea drinkers – ranking in the top 20 of tea consumers per capita in the world. Definitely more of a tea-drinking country than of coffee. There, tea is often offered black when being received as a guest in someone's house (don't forget to take off your shoes!). Milk versions of tea are called *bawarka*, which translates as Bavarian style. There is also a strong tradition of drinking fruit and herbal teas (what we'd strictly call tisanes, see Herbal teas) as the ingredients for these grow plentifully and naturally in the countryside.

GRAB A TEA.
EASTERN EUROPE

CHADO

Uus tn 11, 10111 Tallinn
www.chado.ee

Estonia plays host to one of the most inviting-looking teashops in Eastern Europe; it's cosy, old-fashioned and pretty much everything you'd expect from a teashop, nestled in the back streets of Tallinn. The quirky and friendly atmosphere leaves you completely at ease to browse through their collection of rare teas and learn all about the secrets of brewing a perfect cup. Be sure to strike up a conversation with the shop owner whose passion and love of tea can be felt almost instantaneously.

DOBRÁ ČAJOVNA

Václavské Náměstí 14, 11100 Prague

The Czech Republic tends to take a far more relaxed approach to tea, and throughout the country you can see ever-more tea-houses popping up. Dobrá čajovna in the heart of Prague is often thought as helping ignite the new Czech tea revolution. Although there is now a chain of these tea-houses across the nation and some could perceive it as being too touristy – we say, fear not! They offer a huge selection of specialist teas and have managed to create a beautiful ambience – we say, a thoroughly calming place to enjoy a wonderful cup of tea.

ČAJDŽINICA DŽIRLO

Kovači 16, 71102 Sarajevo

If it's rustic and utterly charming that you're after, then look no further! This effortlessly cool tea-house offers perfectly friendly and knowledgeable service while serving a great range of teas from around the world. If you're ever passing through Sarajevo (in the centre of Bosnia and Herzegovina) be sure to pop in and experience this delightful place in all its glory. You'll undoubtedly spend hours drinking tea, swapping stories with other tourists and engaging in meaningful discussions with the locals – what more could you possibly ask for from a local tea-house?

ČAJOVŇA V PODZEMÍ

Ventúrska 9, 811 01 Bratislava

Another hidden gem of a tearoom – and we mean hidden – is tucked away on a side street at the bottom of a discrete staircase in central Bratislava in Slovakia. Čajovňa

V Podzemí offers a unique tea experience for those wanting to unwind. Here they offer a great mix of tea from around the world, in a laid-back and welcoming atmosphere. We’ve also heard great things about their hummus – and who doesn’t love hummus? There definitely seems to be a trend developing – if it’s a laid-back, friendly ‘hippy’ atmosphere you’re after, then it seems that Eastern Europe has it covered.

KAZAKSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

Drinking tea in a traditional tea-house on the Silk Road.

Kazakstan was very much on the early trading routes between Asia and Russia and, as such, developed a strong tea-drinking culture. Tea is drunk by pretty much everyone, with and without food, often together in groups. Guests are always offered tea, which is poured from a large tea kettle into small, wide-mouthed saucers called *kasirs*. The *kasirs* are only ever half filled as the Kazaks have a fear of cold drinks, believing them to be bad for health. The tea is always drunk hot and when finished the *kasir* is passed back to be refilled. There is a constant movement within the room with tea being poured, passed around, passed back for refilling and so on.

Uzbekistan sits smack bang in the middle of the Silk Road and has paid hospitality to the travellers of the caravans for centuries. Central to this hospitality is the Uzbesk Tea Ceremony, a formal and graceful ritual. When a guest arrives, the host will serve tea, usually accompanied by a traditional snack of fresh flat, round bread. The freshly brewed tea is poured from a teapot into a ceramic cup known as a *piala* and then returned to the teapot three times, allowing the full flavour and aroma of the tea to develop. The first returning is called *loy*, the second *moy* and only after the third time does it become *choy,* or tea. The fourth time, tea is poured into the guest's *piala.* As a token of respect for the guest, the host fills only one half of the *piala* and then, putting their left hand to their heart, with their right hand holds out this *piala* to the guest. Tea, green or black, is always drunk hot to allow the full aroma and flavour to emerge. *Chaikhanas* (tea-houses) are to be found everywhere in Uzbekistan and are usually crowded with men discussing business and the ways of the world over a porcelain pot of tea known as a *chianik*.

RUSSIA

An old samovar at a rural market.

As in many other countries, when tea was brought into Russia in the 17th century it was an aristocratic commodity. In stark contrast to its journey to other countries, though, tea from China travelled to Russia in caravans led by camels – a journey that took well over a year to complete. So, its status as a luxury item remained for quite some time.

Who knew?

Where possible, Russians generally prefer to prepare loose tea and opt for a blend that has been smoked to varying degrees. The romantic notion is that the taste for smoked tea stems back to the days when it was transported by caravan, so would have been exposed to the smoke of the campfires along the route. But who knows…?

But by 1880 the building of the Siberian railway meant this journey time was cut drastically to just two months, making tea both more widely available and significantly cheaper. The samovar now came into its own. Samovar literally means 'self-boiler' and this large urn, often made from copper, nickel or silver, holds a significant amount of hot water and brews a super-strong tea, which is then diluted down to suit. Historically, the samovar was kept heated at all times to allow Russians to make tea whenever they fancy – perfect for the arrival of unexpected guests.

To this day, tea remains a staple in Russian life and is served after meals in an 'afternoon tea' style – but, despite its moniker, this can take place at any time of the day and in any place (home, office, park, car…!). Tea is commonly served to visiting guests and becomes something of an event, with sweet and savoury treats culminating in tea and cakes – even after an evening on the vodka. Some might even say that tea is more of the national drink than vodka.

While green and herbal teas are gaining in popularity, especially with younger tea drinkers, nearly all tea drunk in Russia is black, most of it coming from either China or India, with oolong and keemun teas from China being particularly popular.

Who knew?

Would you like jam with your tea? Russians drink their tea without milk and often with a small side dish of what looks like jam. This fruit offering – called *varenye* – is eaten with a teaspoon while sipping the tea. The closest thing you might get to *varenye* is blackcurrant jam – give it a try!

If you like to take tea in Russian surroundings, then why not try the famous Russian Tea Room? It's not in Russia at all, but on the island of Manhattan, New York. It was founded by some of the members of the Russian Imperial Ballet in 1927 and still retains its modernist Russian-style décor. These days, it's renowned as an exclusive enclave of the New York intellectual and creative set.

> **"I say let the world go to hell, but I should always have my tea."**
>
> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*

HOW TO MAKE: A cup of Russian tea

Don't worry if you don't have a samovar to hand, you can experience all the flavours of a cup of Russian tea by following the steps below, though you will need a small teapot and a strainer.

1 **To your teapot add 1 teaspoon of loose black tea (if you want the smoky Russian experience go for lapsang souchong) per person and add an extra one for the pot.**

2. Pour a small amount of boiling water into the teapot.
3. Brew the tea for 3–4 minutes.
4. pour a little of this concentrated tea into a cup and top up with hot water.
5. Pop in a slice of lemon (Russians rarely serve milk or cream in their tea) and plenty of sugar.

GRAB A TEA.
RUSSIA

Tea is a firm favourite among many Russian households, but where can it be enjoyed out and about in the streets of Russia? These go-to-places not only offer you the chance to revel in local hospitality but also serve up a pretty spectacular cup of tea!

DAGOMYS TEA PLANTATION
302 Zaporozhskaya St, Uch-Dere, Sochi 354231
www.dagomystea.ru

For the hard-core tea fans out there, why not visit Dagomys Tea Plantation and explore the only place in Russia where tea is grown? There you can take a tour of the plantation, as well as enjoy tea in a wooden cabin, nestled within gorgeous natural surroundings. Tea is served from a traditional samovar and accompanied with local sweet treats and delicacies. If learning all about tea is not enough, there is also live folk music and women in full traditional costume – a must-see for those wanting an authentic Russian tea experience!

PERLOV TEA HOUSE
19 Myasnitskaya St, Moscow 101000

If you are on a walking tour of St Petersburg, then you will most likely come across the Perlov tea-house – a great opportunity to mix learning about local history with a nice cup of tea! The building's elaborate façade is a celebration of Chinese architecture and stands in stark contrast to the more humdrum backdrop of the rest of Myasnitskaya St. Passers-by stop to admire the intricate details of dragons and pagodas; but, it is what lies within that is truly worth a visit! Here, the beautiful Chinese design continues and the shop itself offers a vast array of high-end teas as well as coffee and many local sweets.

ASTORIA HOTEL

39 Bolshaya Morskaya, St Petersburg 190000
www.roccofortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/hotel-astoria

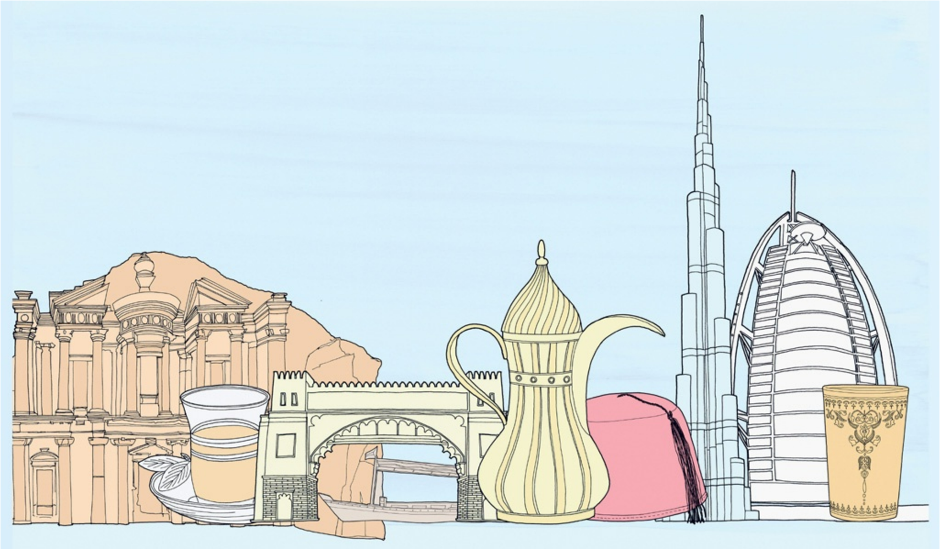
While Russia has its own established tea culture, if you're looking for a more typically British afternoon tea affair, then head on over to the Astoria Hotel's exclusive Rotunda lounge where they offer the city's 'most exquisite afternoon tea' – that's quite the claim, but go and judge for yourself! Along with sipping fine tea from the hotel's specially designed porcelain, you can also indulge in freshly made sandwiches, cakes, pastries and blinis! If there is ever a time to splurge, then what better way than with a gorgeous cup of sweet tea and slice of cake!

TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

www.trans-siberian.co.uk

Embarking on one of the epic Trans-Siberian Railway journeys is on many a bucket list. But what could make this journey even more enjoyable? You got it, a lovely cup of tea! Just imagine it, chugging along through Russia's vast landscape, staring out the window taking in spectacular scenery and meeting people from all walks of life. A romanticised image perhaps (let's not mention the six days in a metal tube) but if you're after a truly social tea experience then this is it. Of course, you can buy tea and other goodies from the dining car, but it's good to know that each wagon of the train has its own samovar, which means you can bring your own tea – sit back and relax with your favourite blend. Perfect!

Middle East



The tea culture dominates in many Middle Eastern countries with centuries of history dating back to the ancient trading routes, most notably the Silk Road from China as well as routes from Sri Lanka and southern India. The importance of tea trading continues to this day with Dubai now playing the role of a major re-exporter of tea and an international doorway for the tea trade. Tea drunk in the Gulf is predominantly black tea, usually drunk with sugar and sometimes with added spices, especially cardamom. Whether or not you add milk to your brew will depend upon the customs of the local area.

TURKEY

Turkish men enjoying tea in a courtyard tea-house in a bazaar.

Tea is huge in Turkey. Turkey is number one worldwide for per capita consumption and ranks number five for production. It's an integral part of everyday life – be it summer, winter, a big family gathering or a quiet day at home. And it's not the touristy apple tea that Turkish people drink, it's a strong black tea; though they do also dip into the herbal arena with rosehip, sage and linden blossom teas.

The origins of tea drinking in Turkey go back to the 16th century when the Silk Road caravans passed through the country. But the real explosion in tea drinking occurred in 1878 after the publication of *Çay Risalesi* (or *The Tea Pamphlet*), touting the health benefits of drinking tea by Mehmet Izzet, the then Governor of Adana. Although coffee was still the preferred hot drink during this period of history, tea consumption began to spread as tea-houses opened in the Sultanahmet area of Istanbul. Also, tea became cheaper; four glasses of tea could be purchased for the price of just one cup of Turkish coffee.

The high consumption of tea is due to its widespread availability in tea-houses and tea gardens all over the country, their role as hubs of social activity and the fact that Turkey has a well-established tea-producing region along its eastern Black Sea coast. Tea gardens, another social venue for drinking tea, gained popularity in the 1950s, especially in Istanbul, and were the place where families went for their social outings. As Turkish tea gardens are social hubs, expect to see kids running around, hear music playing and plenty of lively conversation among young and old.

Who knew?

Tea culture in Turkey is strong and traditional. As a host you are supposed to serve tea for as long as your guests would like. You can never say you've run out of tea! If you're bargaining with a trader in the bazaar and have had your fill of tea, simply put your teaspoon on top of your glass the moment you finish your tea. This signals politely that you really have had enough tea, thank you.

The tea – or should we say *çay* – is prepared as a strong concentrate and then diluted with hot water and sugar. Tea is prepared either in a samovar (see How to make: A cup of Russian tea) or in two separate pots. The lower pot boils the water, the smaller upper pot contains the tea leaves and is where the tea is infused to a strong liquor. This split of brewing allows each drinker to adjust the strength of tea exactly to their taste: strong, straight from the top pot, or in varying degrees of dilution by topping up with water from the bottom pot.

Tea is drunk from tulip-shaped glasses – nearly 400 million of these glasses are sold every year! The clear glass allows the drinker to appreciate the crimson colour of the tea. Often two small sugar cubes are served with tea and in some towns in Eastern Turkey tea is taken in the *kitlama* style, where a lump of sugar is placed between the tongue and the cheek.

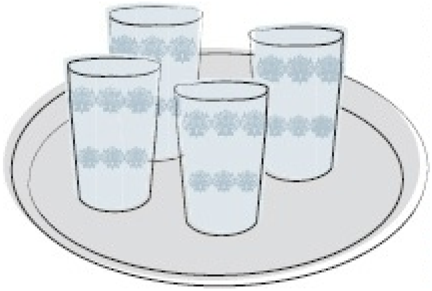
Turkish tea production began in the Black Sea town of Rize in the early 20th century. The government was instrumental in encouraging cultivation and production grew so much that some towns began to change their names to have the word *çay* (Turkish for tea) in them: the town of Mapavri became Çayeli and Kadahor became Çaykara (we like this idea of creating new town names with the word 'tea' in). Today, the Çaykur state-controlled company produces over 60% of all Turkish tea production. Total tea production in Turkey is now enough to satisfy its domestic demand and have excess to export. The tea industry is an important economic player with over 200,000 families involved in the cultivation of tea either as owners of tea-estates or employees in factories.

HOW TO DRINK: Turkish tea

1 Make a really strong small pot of tea. arrange glasses on a serving tray.

2 Fill the glasses a quarter full (half full produces an incredibly strong tea) and top up with water; add sugar to taste. Be sure to leave a 1-cm (½-in) gap at the top so that it's easy to drink without spilling or burning your fingers!

3 Hold the glass at the top with your thumb and index finger (there are no handles) and sip and enjoy!



SAUDI ARABIA

Drinking tea in Bab Makkah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is the second largest consumer of tea in this region with over 19 million cups of tea drunk daily. Drunk mostly black and imported mainly from Sri Lanka and Southern India (often via Dubai), tea is drunk in most social situations and always when business is being done. Glass cups are filled to the brim with hot tea, which may also be sweetened.

IRAQ

Bags of tea in Qaysari Bazaar, Erbil Kurdistan, Iraq.

Tea in Iraq is prepared in a samovar (see How to make: A cup of Russian tea) or using the double-pot method (as in Turkey, see How to drink: Turkish tea). Generally the tea drunk in Iraq is particularly strong – it may be brewed for up to 15 minutes – and is served with at least a couple of spoons of sugar. Tea-houses, called *chaixane*, are found all over Iraq and can range from a simple roadside stall with an urn to an elaborate establishment where men (rarely women) will gather to talk, play backgammon, smoke *nargile* (hookah pipes) and, of course, drink copious amounts of tea.

> **“The Chinese say it’s better to be deprived of food for three days than tea for one.”**
>
> Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

IRAN

Iranians not only drink an awful lot of tea, but they grow a massive amount of it, too. The fact that tea production exists at all in Iran can be traced back to the imagination and determination of an Iranian diplomat, Kashef Al Saltaneh. Around the end of the 19th century tea drinking in Iran was big business, the habit having been established because of the country's position on the Silk Road, but by now the British had a monopoly over the supply of tea from India. Spotting an opportunity, Kashef Al Saltaneh, a fluent French speaker, travelled to India posing as a French businessman. After learning all he could about the tea trade and growing tea, he smuggled some tea saplings back to Iran where he used all his experience to establish tea cultivation in the northern states of Gilan and Mazandaran. The tea bushes flourished and Iran is now the world's 7th largest producer of tea. Kashef Al Saltaneh is known today as the father of Iranian tea, and his mausoleum, in the city of Lahijan, houses a tea museum. It is also in this region that the best-quality Lahijan Spring tea is produced.

Despite producing its own tea, Iranians are such heavy tea drinkers that they also import much from Sri Lanka and India. Throughout the country the teahouses known as *chaikhanahs* serve tea in glass cups of varying strength. The tea is served strong from a samovar and may be diluted with additional hot water, depending upon the drinker's preference. Many Iranians like to sweeten their tea with sugar, particularly a native variety known as *kand*. Traditionally this rock sugar is held between the teeth and the tea is sipped through it.

Africa

As with the Middle East, North Africa has had a strong tea culture for centuries, with tea playing a very special role in society. An invitation to share a cup of tea is so much more than a polite drink with friends or strangers; it is an invitation into a home, into a family and into their hearts. Tea is enjoyed anytime and anywhere – with breakfast, after meals and anytime in between; at the local souks (markets), on the busy streets or in the village square. In contrast, at the southern end of the continent the tea-drinking culture is all about rooibos, an indigenous plant that makes a refreshing infusion (see also Herbal teas). The cultivation of tea is also important in Africa, with Kenya alone representing 22% of all world tea exports.

EGYPT

Tea, or *shai* as it is known in this neck of the woods, is very much the national drink of Egypt, being drunk by most of the population, young and old, rich and poor. Egypt imports most of its tea from Sri Lanka and Kenya, and so important is a guaranteed supply of tea that the government manages tea-estates in Kenya.

There are two styles of tea drinking. In the northern part of the country it is called *koshary*, a fairly light tea that is usually sweetened with cane sugar and fresh mint leaves. In the south, *saiidi* is the most commonly drunk tea; this brew is a much stronger and more bitter version as the tea leaves are boiled vigorously over a high heat for at least 5 minutes. The resultant dark, thick tea requires much sweetening.

Egyptians also have a passion for a native plant – hibiscus – and a caffeine-free herbal infusion of this plant is drunk both hot and over ice. This bright red, tart-tasting infusion is known as *karkady* and is often sweetened too.

MOROCCO, TUNISIA AND ALGERIA

Mint tea lined up on a market stall in the Jemaa El Fna market, Marrakech, Morocco.

All three of these countries feature in the top 20 highest tea consumption per capita in the world (see Top 20 tea drinkers). The tea served in this region, often referred to as the Maghreb, is a brew of Chinese green tea (often Chunmee, a rather bitter green tea) and North African nana mint.

Particularly important in Morocco where it is the national drink, this flavoured tea (also sometimes called Touareg tea) serves almost a ceremonial purpose and is usually enjoyed with a hefty dose of sugar. Whether welcoming friends into your home, haggling at a souk or having a roadside picnic, the preparation, serving and drinking of mint tea as a refreshment is a ritual and an art form – you could say, it's a prerequisite for almost any social interaction.

Making and serving tea in Morocco is a mini ceremony in its own right. In contrast to Turkey where women mostly prepare and serve tea, it’s the men in Morocco who hold centre stage in the tea-making ritual. And it’s impolite to refuse it.

Once the mint tea is brewed, it is poured from a height both to create a frothy top and to cool it down. The tea is drunk in colourful, ornately patterned, small glasses that are common to the region. Mint tea preparation varies from region to region; it is sweeter in the north of Morocco than in the south, and in differing parts of the country, wormwood leaves, pine nuts or lemon verbena may be added.

HOW TO MAKE: Moroccan mint tea

As with all countries, there are significant regional variations, but here's our basic mint tea recipe:

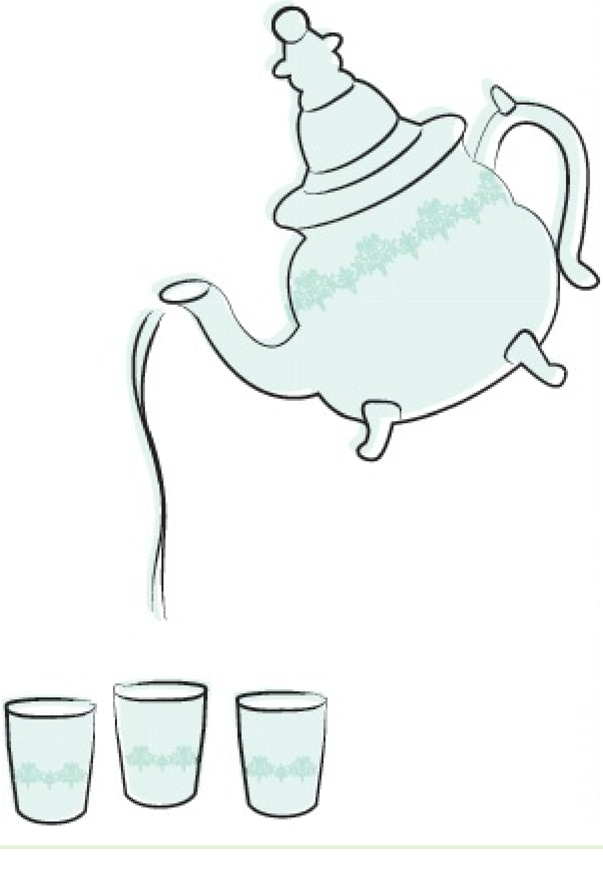
1 Arrange some small tea glasses on a tray.

2 Mix some Chinese green tea with fresh or dried mint leaves and a large lump of sugar (or at least 2 teaspoons) in a metal or stainless-steel teapot (or whatever you can find).

3 Pour hot water into the pot and allow the tea to infuse for several minutes.

4 Pour the tea from a height (about 30cm/12in; this might take a bit of practice as you don't want any nasty accidents) into the small glasses, to create a frothy brew. Garnish with fresh mint leaves and breathe in deeply as the mint aroma fills the room.

Though we call this style of tea Moroccan here, it is also referred to as Maghrebi tea and is drunk throughout the region in northwest Africa in the countries of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania.



KENYA

Tea harvest in Kachege, Kenya.

Kenya is not only the world's third largest tea producer but also the number one exporter of tea. Tea is one of Kenya's main exports. Tea was first planted here in 1904 from seedlings taken from northern India by British planters. The climate in Kenya, with its rainfall and warm temperatures, is ideal for year-round cultivation of tea. Most of the tea produced is black and continues to be exported to Britain where it's used for teabags. Some 60% of all tea production in Kenya is from small holders rather than large company estates. The city of Mombasa hosts one of the world's major tea auctions and also serves as the main port for exports of tea not just from Kenya but also from the nearby landlocked countries of Rwanda and Malawi.

Tea drinking in Kenya follows a mixture of styles – it embraces the traditional 'tea time' of the British colonial past but serves a tea borrowed from India: a milky, spicy, sweet chai tea.

> **"Now the tea began to do its work – as it always did – and the world that only a few minutes previously had seemed so bleak started to seem less so."**

SOUTH AFRICA

ROOiBOS
GRADE
PACKED

Bags upon bags of raw rooibos await processing.

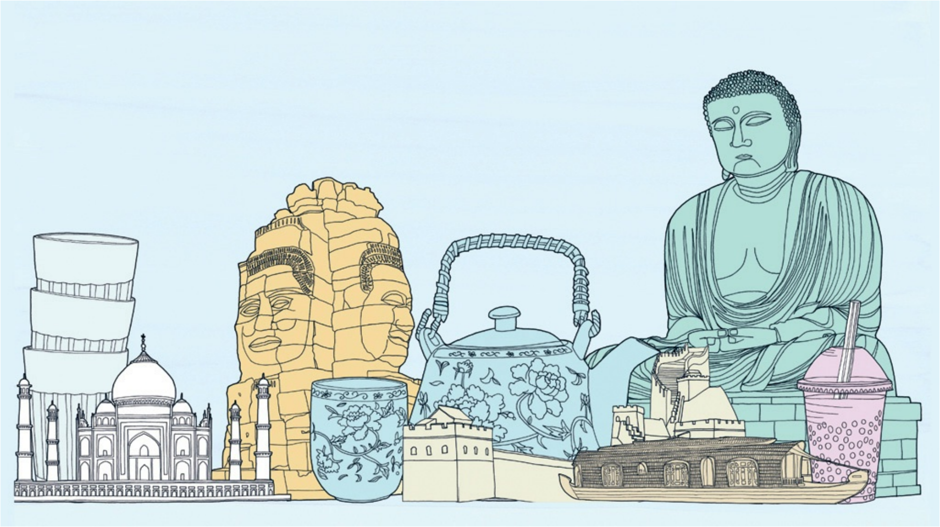
It seems like everyone has their own way of saying the popular tea drink in this region of the world, but we like to pronounce rooibos as 'roy-boss'; some people don't worry about trying to say it any which way and just call it redbush tea instead. So, feel free to choose the way to say it that suits you.

Botanically speaking, rooibos is not a true tea (see Herbal teas): it's strictly a herb that grows as a small shrubby bush, its species name is *Aspalathus linearis* and it grows in just one place – the Cederberg region of South Africa, near Cape Town. The ultra-clean air swirling around the craggy mountains provides the perfect environment for the rooibos plant. Efforts have been made to grow rooibos outside of the Cederberg region but none has been successful.

More than 300 years ago, the original bushmen of the Cederberg area – the Khoi and San peoples – discovered rooibos. Back in their day, they bashed the leaves, piled them in heaps allowing them to ferment then spread them out in the sun to dry. Then, they brewed the leaves in hot water over a fire. And that's pretty much what the commercial rooibos production is like today. The drying out of the rooibos under the African sun changes the colour of the leaves to a deep mahogany.

The green needle-like leaves of the rooibos plant are naturally caffeine-free. Along with the beautiful coppery colour of the rooibos infusion and the natural nutty and full-bodied flavour, this tea is fast becoming sought after as a great caffeine-free alternative to black teas. Traditionally, rooibos is enjoyed with lemon and sugar or honey, but as tea culture is growing (and experimenting) it's also being served as espressos, iced teas and lattes.

South Asia and South East Asia



No other region in the world can boast such tea credentials, from the birthplace of tea, to colonial wars; from major tea-producing nations (four of the world's top six are in this region, see also Top 20 tea guzzlers and Top 20 tea drinkers) to tea ceremonies a plenty. Tea can be found on virtually every street corner and is central to many of the nations' social, political and economic histories. The way tea is prepared and drunk is, however, as varied in styles as the rich history and culture of the region itself.

INDIA

Child enjoying chai in Haridwar.

Tea only became a national beverage in India during the 19th century, after the British began to create large-scale tea plantations to satisfy their country's growing thirst. Even though it's one of the world's biggest suppliers of tea, this relatively recent conversion means that India has not yet had time to develop the long-standing rituals or ceremonies such as those found in China and Japan.

That said, they do drink their tea – *cha-ya* or *chai* – in a certain way, and they really love to drink tea. Most often, chai is a thick, strong black tea that is spiced with cardamom, fennel seeds, ginger, cloves and other spices, sweetened and boiled in milk. Everyone has their own favourite recipes that are passed down from generation to generation. Pretty much every street will have its chai wallah, a street vendor who will serve passers by with his own special brew alongside savoury snacks, such as samosas.

A chai wallah pouring tea in Mysore.

Chai has now become a popular beverage in the Western world. No self-respecting coffee bar would be complete without an offering of chai or chai latte as they are often called. Nothing can really beat the authentic home-made version of chai, but sadly, because of the time involved in preparation those served in Western coffee shops are often sugary, powdered inferior versions of this Indian classic or are simply plain tea 'spiced up' with the addition of a liquid concentrate. Not so nice, after all.

Tea and spices for chai preparation.

Who knew?

Chai vendors serve their wares in small clay pots, which are smashed on the floor after each use – well, it certainly saves on the washing up! Clay pot wallahs can throw a clay pot for chai in 8 seconds flat! They are half-baked and biodegradable – the monsoon rains and baking hot sun soon cause the pots to disintegrate into the soil.

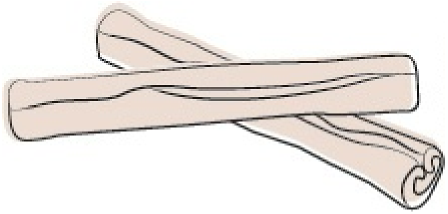
Chai on a stove.

HOW TO MAKE: Chai

It may seem strange for hipsters used to ordering chai in some fancy coffee-house that this is how tea has been prepared and drunk in southern Asia since the 19th century. There are probably as many recipes for chai in India as there are people, using various permutations of tea, spices, water, milk and sugar. The basic steps for making a traditional chai would be:

1. Prepare a spicy masala mixture; this could contain any of the following: cardamom pods, cloves, cinnamon sticks, ginger root, black peppercorns and nutmeg. Ideally grind down to a fine powder; though, some people prefer to keep the spices whole.
2. Tip the masala mix into a saucepan of water (say about 500ml/18fl oz) along with some strong black tea leaves.
3. Bring to the boil and keep boiling for 5 minutes.
4. Add 500ml (18fl oz) of milk, bring back to the boil and boil for at least a further 5 minutes.
5. Add sugar (jaggery or palm sugar is popular) to taste.
6. Then, strain the contents of the pan so that the tea leaves and any whole spices are removed.
7. Serve and enjoy.

The water to milk ratio, amount and type of spices used, amount of sugar, length of boil; all these are variable and different combinations will deliver different flavours. Experiment to find what suits you best.



Chai seller with glasses of chai.

SRI LANKA

Tea pluckers at Haputale tea plantation in the highlands of Sri Lanka.

To give it its full name, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (or Ceylon as it was known before 1972) was introduced to both tea cultivation and tea drinking by the British colonials. To this day there continues a tradition of drinking tea, specifically 'milk tea', which is served throughout the day, except in the middle of the morning when tea is drunk without the white stuff.

On this island in the Indian Ocean, tea is often sweetened with a smattering of jaggery: a form of concentrated crystalline sweetener, sold in little blocks, often made from sugar cane juice or the sap of date palms.

Who knew?

When the tea is poured from a great height (about a yard in old measures; that's 90cm in metric), it's referred to as *yaara they* or 'yard tea'; this skilful pouring procedure ensures a very bubbly consistency to the finished tea.

PAKISTAN

Surprisingly, Pakistan doesn’t produce tea but consumes a lot, being the world’s third biggest importer with most tea coming from Kenya. Again, tea here is drunk with milk. *Elaichi chai*, a milky tea with cardamom, is drunk throughout Pakistan but is particularly popular in Karachi. *Doohd pati* is a milk tea in the purest form, a very thick milky tea with no water added at all and is popular in the Punjab. In the northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, the tea of choice tends to be a green tea known as *kahwah*, while in Kashmir they drink a green tea chai with pistachios and cardamom, which turns a shade of pink during making.

Who knew?

A famous Balti proverb states that the first time you take tea with someone you are a stranger, the second time you become an honoured guest, the third time you become family.

THAILAND

Would you buy tea in a plastic bag? Well, in Bangkok no one even bats an eye if you're walking down the street with a plastic bag of tea, with plenty of ice cubes inside. With its bright amber colour, Thai iced tea is the perfect drink on a sticky hot day – and you get a fair few of those in this region of the world.

This version of milky tea can be found throughout Asia. It's usually served over ice and its ingredients consist of strongly brewed black tea, sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk and various aromatic spices, including star anise, green cardamom, orange blossoms, cloves, cinnamon and ground tamarind. The overbearing sweetness of this tea binds all the flavours together. Thai iced tea is the perfect complement to spicy cuisine.

MYANMAR

LUCKY SEVEN
TEA SHOP

Lucky Seven, a famous and popular teashop in Yangon, Myanmar.

Myanmar is one of the few countries in the world where tea is eaten as well as drunk. Yes, you read that right. Eaten. *Lahpet* is Burmese for fermented or pickled tea; it's something of a national delicacy and historically was exchanged as a peace offering between warring kingdoms and, in fact, is still offered and eaten when settling disputes. There is even a saying that demonstrates the importance of *lahpet*: 'Of all the fruit, the mango's the best; of all the meat, pork's the best; of all the leaves, *lahpet*'s the best'.

In Myanmar, *lahpet* is traditionally made by taking the best fresh tea leaves, steaming them for about 5 minutes before either drying or fermenting them. The young steamed leaves are then heaped together into a pulp and placed into bamboo baskets, which are then placed in pits and pressed down by heavy weights. The baskets are checked from time to time to see how everything is progressing and sometimes the leaves are resteamed. Pickled tea can be bought in packets throughout Myanmar (and is also available online for those adventurous types).

The pickled tea has a slightly sweet and sour taste and leafy texture; some pickled teas are flavoured with spices such as ginger. Probably the most popular use of this tea is in pickled tea salad or *lahpet thohk*, a favourite national dish, to be accompanied, of course, by a cup of refreshing green tea.

HOW TO: Pickle tea

Pickling tea in the traditional manner may prove a little difficult and time consuming, but this quicker method delivers a pretty good version. Give it

a try.

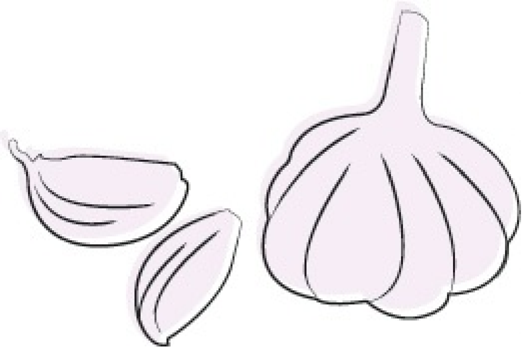
1 Place 250ml (8½fl oz) vinegar, 20g (¾oz) green tea leaves (Sencha) and 250ml (8½fl oz) water in a pan over a medium heat.

2 Bring to the boil then reduce the heat to medium–low and simmer for 30 minutes.

3 Drain, rinse and discard any hard pieces. Squeeze out the excess liquid.

4 Process in a food processor with 5½ tbsp sesame oil, 4 tbsp peanut oil, 1 tbsp fish sauce and 2 chopped garlic cloves. Then, stir in 2 tbsp lemon juice.

Your pickled tea can be kept in the fridge for up to 3 months.



VIETNAM

Vietnam is the world's 6th largest tea producer and its tea-drinking culture goes back thousands of years. Tea drinking is an integral part of Vietnamese culture. Present everywhere from holidays to weddings, tea brings friends and family together in conversation and celebration. Most tea drunk in Vietnam is plain green tea but it can also be combined with herbal remedies or scented with flowers.

Lotus tea is popular during Tet, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, a unique tea made in a traditional way. An ancient Hanoi people, known as Tràng An, were renowned for their skills in making and drinking lotus tea. In Vietnam, the lotus flower is seen as pure and serene and a bloom that is said to 'gather the essence of heaven and earth in its scent'.

To have the finest lotus tea, lotus flowers must be picked when they have just bloomed and kept fresh. It is believed that the best lotus flowers – because their blooms are larger and more fragrant – are collected from certain locations, such as Tinh Tam Lake in Hue City and the ponds of Quăng Bá village near West Lake in Hanoi. Once the blossoms are picked, the lotus flower buds are very carefully peeled back, the petals preserved without a single rip or tear and then it's combined with the fresh green tea. After all the buds are full and rebuilt they are put aside overnight, and the next evening the process is reversed and the now wonderfully aromatic lotus tea is extracted.

CAMBODIA

Tea is popular throughout Cambodia and has significance for certain rites of passage. For instance, tea plays a particularly important role in wedding ceremonies when the bride and groom offer a ritual cup of tea to their ancestors. This ceremony calls for those who have passed away, both for family members and for friends, to offer their blessings and observe the wedding, if not in body, but in spirit. It is a time to reflect on those close to the wedding party and to include them in the joyful day.

CHINA

Enjoying tea in a tea-house at the ancient Lizhou township in Xichang, Sichuan province.

It's no surprise that, as tea was allegedly discovered in China by the Emperor Shen Nung in 2737bc, China today produces more tea than any other nation in the world – over a whopping 1.6 million tonnes a year, most of it is consumed within China, with only 18% being exported of which just 1% goes to Europe. Tea was traditionally considered to be one of the seven daily necessities and so, naturally, everyone drank tea. And, as we all know, there are an awful lot of people in China.

In the tea world, China is unique – it's the only country in the world to produce all six styles of tea, predominantly green but also black, oolong, yellow, white and pu-erh (see also Types of tea). There are centuries of history relating to how tea should be cultivated, processed, served and consumed, and so the Chinese really do know a thing or two about tea. And it rubs off, the Chinese name for tea – *chá* – has travelled to all corners of the globe.

There are literally thousands of tea-houses across China and many customs associated with tea drinking. Many family gatherings take place in tea-houses where extended families will get together especially on Sundays and for special festivals.

Who knew?

In the traditional Chinese tea ceremony, a red napkin is folded to banish any bad *qi* (energy).

Traditionally, serving tea was a mark of respect to someone of a higher rank. Today, it is still served as something special, often at a wedding where it is served by the bride and groom to their parents to express gratitude and as a symbol of acceptance into the extended families of both parties. The bride and groom will kneel in front of their parents and offer tea to express their thanks for bringing them up and making them who they are. The parents will respond by handing the bride and groom a red envelope, which symbolises good luck.

While there are many formal ceremonies associated with drinking tea in China, most people drink their tea from glass jars that they carry with them during the day. The jars will contain tea leaves and will be regularly topped up with hot water. So the concept of 'tea-on-the-go' has been popular in China for years.

Who knew?

The Chinese will often infuse their tea leaves several times, since each infusion delivers something different on the flavour front.

GRAB A TEA.

CHINA

WANGYE TEMPLE

Fuxi Riverside, Ziliujing District, Zigong 643000

What better way to enjoy tea than in a 100-year-old temple turned tea-house? Located above the Fuxi River in Zigong, this is the perfect place to come and explore one of the most beautiful Sichuan tea-houses. Displaying untouched ancient architecture as well as gorgeous scenery, Wangye Temple offers a flawless backdrop to relax and enjoy fine tea. Here you can spend your time socialising and feel like a true local, or if you'd prefer you can simply sit back and take in the peaceful surroundings. While many people travel to Zigong to learn about the town's salt-mining history or visit the famed dinosaur museum, the spectacular tea-houses that the region has to offer are definitely the star attraction in our eyes.

LAO SHE TEAHOUSE

Building 3, Zhengyang Market, Qianmen West Street, Xicheng District, Beijing 100051

www.laosheteahouse.net

Undoubtedly one of the more famous tea-houses in Beijing, Lao She Teahouse offers a unique tea experience that aims to transport you back to the days of Old Beijing. Here you can enjoy Chinese tea and snacks with a side helping of Chinese theatre! Each night features a 90-minute show offering the best of Chinese traditional arts, ranging from acrobats and comedy to Peking Opera. Although considered pretty touristy nowadays, the place definitely still has its charm and you will find it full of locals who come to enjoy the entertainment. If you're looking for somewhere to have a fun-filled night and soak up authentic Beijing culture with tea on tap, then this is the place!

MALIANDAO, AKA TEA STREET

Maliandao Street, Beijing 100055

If you've got a spare afternoon (or even a whole day) and wandering around teashops and markets is your idea of heaven, then definitely check out Maliandao Street in Beijing. Its other name is Tea Street and as soon as you arrive, you'll see why. Experts and novices alike can rejoice in the abundance of tea on offer and purchase any type of tea paraphernalia. Spend hours on the hunt for the perfect tea – each seller will be more than happy to let you try before you buy and will help you find exactly what you're after. The language barrier has the potential to be a slight issue, so have a few key phrases up your sleeve but, if in doubt, we always find nodding and pointing always works a charm.

MOUNT HUASHAN TEA-HOUSE

Huayin 714200

Daredevils who like to unwind with a brew can probably be found atop Mount Huashan – widely classed as one of the most petrifying mountain trails in existence. At one point the only way to continue your journey is via tiny planks that have been literally bolted to the mountainside; seriously, look it up – the pictures are enough to make us feel woozy. However, amazingly located at the southern peak of this death-defying trek is a Taoist temple that now acts primarily as a tea-house! Taking tea at an altitude of over 2160 metres (7087ft) is surely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and a must for the braver tea fans out there. They serve an insanely strong black tea to accompany the breathtaking views and this cuppa should be enough to get your adrenaline levels back to normal – if you make it to the top, that is.

HEMING TEA-HOUSE

12 Shaocheng Road, Qingyang District, Chengdu 610015

If, like us, you love a spot of people watching then this tea-house will be right up your street. In Chengdu's central People's Park – a great space for some ambling away from the hustle and bustle – head on over to the Heming Tea-house; here is a beautifully tranquil spot to relax and watch the world go by. You'll find locals playing cards as well as tourists relaxing by the lake, enjoying the scenery. Many of the larger parks in China have numerous tea-houses hidden within them – we recommend putting on your comfiest shoes and spending the day exploring the local parks to see what hidden gems, and what teas, you can discover!

SONG FANG MAISON DE THÉ

227 Yongjia Road, Shanghai 200031

www.songfangtea.com

This specialist teashop in Shanghai serves up premium Chinese teas as well as offering a lovely selection of blended teas from France. The founder is a French native who has channelled her love of tea into a business celebrating the best of both Chinese and French culture. Split across a charming three-storey house, Song Fang offers the best of both worlds with a traditional shop on the first floor as well as a modern and welcoming tea-house on the upper level. The staff are knowledgeable (they sell 70 types of tea) and friendly, and the change in pace upon entering the building can be felt instantly – definitely worth popping in to escape the busy streets of Shanghai and taste some truly exceptional tea!

CHINESE TEA CEREMONY

Where to begin with the Chinese tea ceremony, or what is also known as *gong fu cha* ceremony? *Gong fu* translates as 'the time for tea' or 'making tea with effort', which references the time and effort it takes to make tea traditionally.

The art of making and preparing tea is known as cha dao. In this day and age, it may appear to be a time-consuming method, but its symbolism and ritualism demonstrates the important role that tea still plays in Chinese culture.

As you'd expect for a country that has centuries of tea experience and an absolutely massive landmass, China does indeed have ceremonies to honour tea dating back to the early 17th century. *Gong fu* does indeed sound like *kung fu* (see below) but there really is no place for Bruce Lee antics here.

Let's start with some simple facts:

- China is a big country with a massive population.
- The Chinese have drunk tea for centuries.
- They drink a lot of tea.
- They treat it with the utmost respect.

All of the above means that if we were to refer to a single definitive Chinese tea ceremony we'd be way off the mark. Quite simply, there are many different versions.

What is a common thread, however, is that all ceremonies are performed with a sense of artistry and in an environment of calm serenity. The teapot and cups are usually made from clay with varying degrees of ornateness. What is also very true is that 'making tea with effort' is certainly the best way to sum up a preparation method that to those who brew their tea for 30 seconds with a paper teabag would see as Herculean. What follows below, for the sake of brevity, is what we see as some of the ceremony's common features.

The ceremony

1. **The ceremony begins with the teapot being warmed with boiling water. Next, the tea leaves are added to the pot, usually with a bamboo scoop.**

2. **Then, hot – but not boiling – water is added to rinse the leaves; this water is then discarded. When the leaves are rinsed like this, the maker of the tea gets the first aromas of the tea being made.**

3. **More hot water is poured in; again, not boiling water as tea leaves are sensitive to temperature. The teapot is intentionally filled to overflowing. Any debris or bubbles that form on the surface are then scooped away gently to keep the tea from around the mouth of the teapot, which is then closed with the lid.**

4. **Hot water (often the same water that was discarded in step 3) is poured over the outside of the teapot to keep the pot warm all over. The tea within is allowed to infuse for a period of time, often as short as 1 minute, before being poured in a continuous motion into cups that are arranged in a semi-circle. The cups are only half-filled, the empty half signifies friendship and affection.**

5. **The tea is then passed to those drinking it, who will first breathe in the aroma before drinking in three swallows.**

Who knew?

You might think that *gong fu* sounds a bit like *kung fu* and you'd be right. In fact, the Chinese symbols for *gong fu* are the same as for these martial arts.

TAIWAN

Refreshing bubble tea or boba.

Taiwan is famous both for its production of oolong tea and, more recently, for a new phenomenon known as bubble tea.

Pearl milk tea, boba milk tea or, as most of us know it, bubble milk tea started out in the 1980s in Taiwan, and its popularity has spread throughout Asia where it's usually sold by street vendors. It has a bit of a cult following in the West, too – with funky bubble tea bars opening up in smart city locations across North America, Europe and the Middle East. This contemporary counterpart to Chinese tea is a mixture of tea, powdered milk, flavourings, sugar syrup and black tapioca balls or 'bubbles'.

Bubble tea joins the global trend for sweeter forms of tea or for using traditional tea leaves in modern and exciting new ways.

Who knew?

Bubble milk tea might contain tea but it also contains lots of other ingredients, on top of the tapioca balls – calorie-wise, it can add up to a lot more than your average hamburger!

TIBET

A Ngakpa, a Tibetan yogi, drinking a butter tea in Namzong, Qinghai province.

Tibet is host to perhaps one of the most obscure tea traditions. Strong black tea leaves or pu-erh are simmered overnight to create a super-strong tea concentrate. This is then churned with yak or goat's milk butter and salt to create a thick, frothy drink. Far from unusual for Tibetans, this is drunk by most people at least once a day as its warming properties and high calorie content form a key source of nutrition.

JAPAN

Japan is probably the country best known in the world for the ceremonial aspect of drinking tea. Over the centuries the Japanese have made the preparation and drinking of tea a revered art form. The principles of the Japanese tea ceremony – or *Cha-no-yu* – are rooted in the humility and respect of those involved, the appreciation of the moment's uniqueness and the art of simplicity and balance.

Green tea is by far the most popular beverage in Japan. It is so widely available that the Japanese simply refer to it as 'tea' or 'o-cha'. This term can refer to a variety of green teas, depending on the growing conditions of the tea bush it came from, where on the plant the leaves were plucked, how they were steamed, dried and processed and for how long for. Over the course of hundreds of years, the Japanese have developed many green teas that are an inherent part of their culture and everyday life (see Japanese green teas).

> **"In the liquid amber within the ivory porcelain, the initiated may touch the sweet reticence of Confucius, the piquancy of Laotse, and the ethereal aroma of Sakyamuni himself."**
>
> Kakuzō Okakura (1863–1913), Japanese scholar, *The Book of Tea*

THE STORY BEHIND IT

Tea was first introduced to Japan by Buddhist monks who had travelled to China in the 700s, but for many years it was only consumed among those in religious and royal circles. It wasn't until 1191 when a Japanese priest named Eisia returned from a long stint in China that the cultivation and consumption of tea became widespread. He had travelled to China to study Zen Buddhist meditation and had been introduced to the Chinese custom of making tea from powdered leaves, therefore consuming the whole leaf. He proclaimed that Matcha, meaning 'fine powder tea', played a crucial role in Zen meditation as it helped keep tiredness at bay. He went on to write Japan's first tea speciality book highlighting the health benefits of drinking Matcha.

Matcha soon became available to those who could afford it; a luxury item for the aristocracy and ruling samurai-warrior elite. If the rest of society wanted a taste, they had to come up with other ways to make it more affordable – and that's just what they did.

Genmaicha is green tea mixed with toasted rice. The poorest in Japanese society would often find themselves without food for long periods, so they added rice to the tea to act as a filler. This extra ingredient reduced the amount of tea needed and therefore its cost. The story goes that a man in Kyoto came across this concoction by accident, when he dropped a piece of his mochi (rice cake) into his cup of tea, and didn't want it to go to waste. Today, genmaicha is drunk by everyone and is also known as 'popcorn tea' due to the popped rice resembling popped corn.

The majority of green tea drunk today in Japan is Sencha, a tea developed during the 18th century. It requires plucking the youngest tea leaves from the bush and then steaming and crumpling them as they are dried to prevent fermentation (see also Oxidation). Gyokuro is considered a higher-quality version of Sencha, because the leaves have been grown under shade, rather than being exposed to sunlight.

TEA DRINKING IN 21ST-CENTURY JAPAN

Step onto any street, into any café, office block or inside any home in Japan and you can be sure tea will make an appearance. Hot or cold, tea is often provided free of charge in restaurants and sold in bottles or cans in vending machines, kiosks, convenience-store fridges and supermarkets. Western-style black tea (or *kocha*) sometimes sweetened with milk and sugar in chilled bottles, is available, but green tea is the staple of Japanese tea-drinking habits, with oolong growing in popularity.

Within the home, green tea is consumed morning, noon and night, and is always offered to guests. This will almost certainly be loose-leaf tea put through a strainer and prepared for you with care by the host. Ask for sugar, and you'll definitely reveal yourself as a *gaijin* or 'foreigner'. Sugar is not added to green teas, as it is considered a great palate cleanser, and many Japanese people drink green tea instead of water to stay hydrated. This trend has contributed to the rise in green tea 'on the go' – ready-to-drink bottled green teas, which are widely available for the busy lifestyles of today's tea drinkers.

The younger generation are aware of other drinks, such as grape-, melon- and peach-flavoured fizzy drinks, that compete for space in shops and vending machines. As of yet, though, green tea remains unchallenged – with old and young alike continuing to opt for green tea as their beverage of choice. It makes sense; there aren't many drinks out there that can top green tea on taste, refreshment and health benefits combined.

HOW TO MAKE: Matcha tea, the traditional way

The traditional way to drink Matcha is whisked into hot water using a bamboo whisk and served in a bowl. This makes a deliciously smooth and frothy tea. Genuine Matcha has a natural sweetness to it; it won't taste bitter or harsh, like some green teas do. It tastes rich, smooth and has a natural, fresh, lasting green tea flavour.

1 Add a scoop of Matcha to your bowl (that's about ½ teaspoon).

2 Add a small amount of warm water – not too hot or you'll burn the leaves.

3 Give it a whisk – you can use a traditional bamboo whisk, as the Japanese do, if you like, but an electric hand-held whisk works a treat.

4 Top up with warm water. Enjoy and feel serene.

Because Matcha is a powder, there are lots of ways to drink and eat it. See Matcha, Chocolate and Ginger tiramisu, Green tea pound cake, Matcha & pistachio cupcakes with white chocolate frosting, Matcha truffles, Earl Grey martini with a lemon salt rim, 'Knock your socks off' teashakes, Almond matcha latte and Super-power matcha smoothies.

GRAB A TEA.

JAPANESE TEA CEREMONIES

HOTEL CHINZANSO
10-8, Sekiguchi 2-chome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-8680
www.hotel-chinzanso-tokyo.com

You could be forgiven for thinking you'd fallen down a rabbit hole and landed in an enchanted forest when paying a visit to Hotel Chinzanso. Before entering you're in the heart of the relentless hustle and bustle of Tokyo and then once inside you're met with a vast and elegant entrance area, and a floor-to-ceiling glass window looking out onto the hotel's stunning garden. A hotel and outdoor private garden as spacious as these are hard to come by in Tokyo. Known as an 'urban oasis', the hotel's garden is in bloom throughout the year, and it is within this haven that the hotel's traditional tea-houses can be found. The hotel has a resident 'tea master' who can lead the tea ceremony, and we can personally recommend this to be an informative yet immersive experience. The hotel also offers the largest spa facility in Tokyo, including an all-weather swimming pool and natural hot springs.

TONDAYA

Ichijo-agaru Omiya Kamigyo-ku Kyoto 602-8226

www.tondaya.co.jp

Tondaya is a lifestyle museum that offers a set menu of activities including a tea ceremony and kimono dressing. For a reasonable rate you can also have a tour of the building and a bento box lunch. To soothe the creative types they also offer calligraphy and origami classes. And for a bit of fun you can take a step back in time and imagine yourself as a member of the royal court, playing a couple rounds of some 'ancient imperial Japanese games'. The Machiya, a traditional wooden townhouse, was originally built in 1885 and used as a kimono wholesaler with a workshop in the front, and it's located about a 25-minute bus ride from Kyoto station.

JOUKEIAN

Sannai cho 1-24 Sennyuji Higashiyamaku, Kyoto

www.joukeian.gotohp.jp

Joukeian is a short drive from Kyoto station and is run by Matsumoto Soko who has over 25 years experience in practising the art of the tea ceremony. She offers a selection of courses ranging from short to full (what's known as *chaji*) and even offers a night course where you can experience the ceremony by candlelight.

JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY

Maybe the most talked about tea ceremony around the world, the Japanese tea ceremony is known as *Cha-no-yu*, which roughly translates as 'hot water for tea'. That sounds so simple doesn't it? Thankfully, from a tea lover's perspective, it is anything but.

The tea used in the ceremony is Matcha, a very fine powder of ground-shade-grown green tea leaves. To prepare the Matcha tea, a few simple utensils are required:

- a bowl

- a bamboo whisk
- a bamboo tea scoop
- a sifter
- a bamboo ladle
- a large kettle
- a hearth or heat source.

The tea ceremony centres on the preparation and serving of Matcha in the presence of guests, and a full-length ceremony can last about four hours. Each act involved is designed to focus the senses on the task at hand, and distractions are kept to a minimum.

It is known for being a very peaceful experience and yet its origins lie among the rowdy gatherings of the rich who took great pleasure in acquiring precious tea-making utensils and proudly displaying them in their grand halls.

By the 15th century, Zen Buddhist masters had their own ideas on serving tea to guests. Their methods had a more spiritual motivation – moving away from valuing material possessions and more towards appreciating simple beauty within themselves and in their surroundings, which became the basis of the tea ceremony.

It wasn't until the end of the 19th century, when the warrior-samurai class was abolished, that women took over from men as the main practitioners of tea. From this point on a young lady was required to study the tea ceremony in order to develop fine manners and grace. Below, we outline the key steps carried out at a Japanese tea ceremony.

The ceremony

1 The guest is greeted by the host with a bow at the entrance gate.

2 The guest washes their hands in a stone wash-basin and they also remove their shoes before entering the tea-house. This last bit is common practice in all Japanese homes and traditional buildings.

3 At a full-length ceremony a small meal will be served; however, in shorter versions a little sweet treat will be offered at the start of the ceremony.

4 The tea urn, scoop and bowl are wiped down in a symbolic gesture of purifying the utensils about to be used.

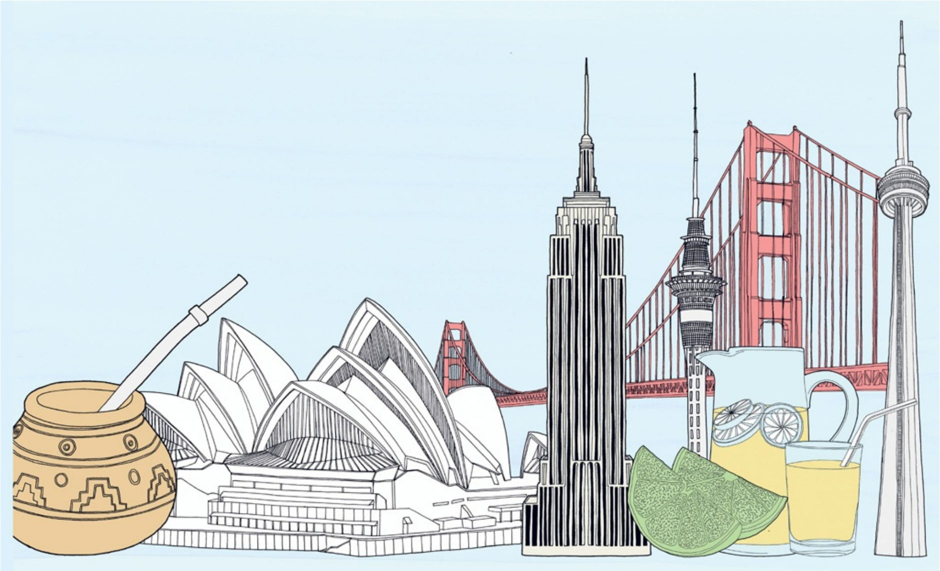
5 Using the scoop, the host transfers the Matcha into the bowl and then adds hot water from a kettle using a bamboo ladle. The mixture is then mixed with a bamboo whisk.

6 The guest(s) is then offered the freshly made Matcha tea and it is placed in front of them. The guest should graciously thank their host with a slight bow of the head.

7 The bowl should be placed in the left hand and guided to the lips with the right. If there is more than one guest, then the first guest wipes the area he/she has just drunk from and passes the bowl to the next guest, who will drink from the same place as the first guest; this gesture is supposed to symbolise the bonding of all participants.

8 Conversation throughout will usually be limited to talk of the utensils and the decorations within the tea-house.

The Americas and Australasia



There's something of a revolution going on in the world of tea in North America. More than 300 years after tea played a role in the original American Revolution, tea is undergoing a major facelift as tea drinkers are discovering quality teas from around the world served in ever more locations and ever more styles: hot, iced, blended with all sorts of other ingredients and shaken and stirred. When Starbucks acquired Teavana, a major chain of teashops, in late 2012 it was apparent something was really stirring in the world of tea. And downunder, it's a story of pioneers, cosmopolitan tea culture and the 'make a brew wherever you are in the bush' device.

USA

Oh-so refreshing – freshly brewed iced tea.

The United States is famed for three things teawise: the Boston Tea Party, its huge consumption of iced rather than hot tea and the invention of the teabag.

Most people have heard about the Boston Tea Party. It happened on 16th December 1773, when American patriots disguised as Mohawk Indians threw 342 chests of tea belonging to the East India Company from their ships into the harbour in Boston. This protest concerned not only the tax on tea but also the perceived monopoly of the East India Company. The Boston Tea Party is one of the best-known historical moments associated with tea and one that would pave the way to the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence in July 1776. Some would say that it also, in some ways, signalled the potential end to the tea-drinking habit that had been established up to that point; drinking or serving tea was seen to be unpatriotic. This event is largely why tea has never been part of the national identity of the United States of America.

Ironically it's partly because there have been no deep-rooted tea traditions that tea culture in the US today is thriving. Consumption of tea is on the rise: it's seen as a dynamic and exciting beverage with endless possibilities. The rich multiculturalism of the country means that the strong tea cultures of China, Japan, Eastern Europe and Britain all influence how tea is now perceived. There are no limits to what can be done with tea: it's drunk hot or iced, pure and unadulterated or with combinations of exotic flavours, as chai lattes, as 'bubble' tea and used in alcoholic cocktails and ever more as an ingredient in cooking.

Numerous tea bars, ranging from the traditional kind influenced by European or Asian styles to more contemporary venues that compete with the most stylish and urban coffee-houses, are springing up across the nation, but particularly in the metropolitan cities on the East and West coasts. Green teas and herbal infusions are gaining in popularity as Americans look for potentially healthier alternatives to fizzy soft drinks and coffee. What is happening now in tea bars across the US is likely to influence the way tea is served worldwide.

Who knew?

There is a place in New York state called Teatown. The name Teatown dates back to 1776 when tea was scarce, due to British taxation. A man named John Arthur moved to an area in northern Westchester after hoarding a chest full of tea, with ideas to sell it for a massive profit. A group of women called the Daughters of Eve discovered that he had a stash of tea and demanded a reasonable price; he refused, so the women besieged his home. After that, Mr Arthur, in exchange for peace, agreed to sell the tea at a fair price. Now, the area is known as Teatown.

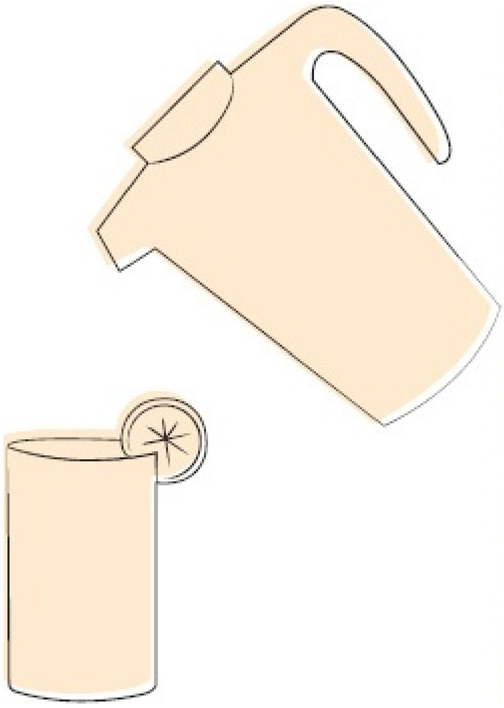
HOW TO MAKE: Iced tea

There are various ways of making iced tea. We certainly prefer the 'fresh brewed' approach that uses real tea leaves rather than the sugary, instant tea powder sold in large tubs. In the southern states, a popular way to make iced tea is simply to place tea and cold water into a large glass jar or jug and leave to stand in the sun for 2–4 hours. Remove the tea and add ice and sugar if desired. See also Super-easy, real, freshly brewed iced teas for our favourite flavours of iced teas.

We prefer this much quicker way, which gives you freshly brewed iced tea in minutes.

1. Infuse some tea leaves in boiling water for 3–5 minutes in a glass or a jug; be sure to just cover the leaves with water to obtain a very concentrated infusion.
2. Then, remove the leaves and add iced water.

3 **Garnish with fruit and a sprig of mint and it's ready to drink.**



Unlike most countries in the world, over 80% of all the tea that is drunk in the US is drunk as iced tea. Some say that the origins of iced tea go back to 1904 during the World Fair in St Louis, when Richard Blechynden, an enterprising English merchant, was in charge of the tea pavilion; however, due to the blistering heat of the day, he was having little success in attracting visitors. Somewhat desperate to show off his tea, he decided to serve it cold in glasses filled with ice. This proved to be an instant success and this is the moment that iced tea is said to have caught the attention of tea drinkers across the states. However, the true origins of iced tea appear to go back much further as tea-based drinks known as 'punches' were common in southern states in the early 1800s. These 'punches' were actually cocktails of green tea and alcohol. An early recipe for one such beverage appeared in an 1839 cookbook entitled *The Kentucky Housewife* where author Lettice Bryan suggested combining 1½ pints of strong tea, 2½ cups of white sugar, ½ pint of sweet cream and a bottle of claret (dry red wine) or champagne. This beverage could be served hot or cold. Hic!

Who knew?

In April 1995, South Carolina's grown tea was officially adopted as the Official Hospitality Beverage of the state.

Other mentions of iced tea appeared in various other publications and as time moved on it seemed the most common way to drink tea would become black tea, with lemon and sugar over ice. In southern states, sweet iced tea is found everywhere, almost replacing water as the beverage of choice to help combat the intense summery heat. Tea doesn't come much more convenient than preprepared in a bottle, and ready-to-drink iced tea has become increasingly popular with sales now of over $5 billion. Now, that's an awful lot of iced tea.

While tea drinking is becoming ever more popular, the US is certainly not renowned for growing tea; that said, tea is grown in South Carolina, Washington state, Alabama and Hawaii. Probably the most significant tea plantations are in South Carolina, where the subtropical climate, ample rainfall and sandy soils make great conditions for growing tea bushes. Tea was first successfully grown in this region in the late 1880s but it wasn't until 1963 that a 127-acre (51.4-hectare) former potato farm on Wadmalaw Island was replanted with tea. Over the years, this has become a commercially viable tea-estate, complete with factory and produces green and black teas.

> **"The most trying hours in life are between four o'clock and the evening meal. A cup of tea at this time adds a lot of comfort and happiness."**
>
> Royal S. Copeland (1868–1938), *US Senator and academic*

CANADA

Carnation milk, in first or last?

While the vast majority of tea drunk in the US is iced, their northern neighbours in Canada have very different habits with the majority of tea consumption being hot. However, the vastness of Canada sees different tea preferences. On the West Coast most tea consumption is green tea and herbal; tea has very much been adopted as an alternative to coffee for many. Way out east in Newfoundland, tea is more traditional: the majority of tea is drunk as it is in Ireland, strong and with milk. Carnation milk to be precise as Newfoundland lacks a major dairy industry. In between, pretty much anything goes with sophisticated tea bars enjoying success in cities such as Toronto and more French-style s*alons de thé* experienced in Montreal.

Who knew?

The Inuit in Northern Canada regard tea as a very precious commodity (just like us) and drink a very strong black tea with no milk or sugar.

INUIT TEA

As well as strong black tea, the Inuit drink several herbal infusions. A tea known as Labrador tea (obviously from Labrador province not the dog!) is made from the leaves of a low-growing evergreen shrub. The leaves are used to make a tea rich in vitamin C that's best drunk as a weak brew as it has various toxic properties. Other herbal teas commonly associated with the frozen North include crowberry, juniper and cloudberry, mostly drunk for medicinal reasons.

GRAB A TEA.

USA & CANADA

THE DANDELION

124 S 18th St, Philadelphia, PA 19103

www.thedandelionpub.com

When visiting Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square neighbourhood, The Dandelion is *the* destination for modern British gastropub cuisine. Their afternoon tea service, which is served everyday from 3pm till 5pm, has something for every kind of tea fan! The 'Queen's Croquet Ground' is a more traditional tea service that offers Twinings and teapigs. The 'Mad Hatter Tea Party' menu caters to adventurous tea fans, of age of course, with unique tea cocktails such as Green Tea Mojito and Chamomile Lemonade with Bourbon. Lastly, 'The Dormouse – High Tea for Tots' has caffeine-free teas and snacks such as peanut butter and grilled cheese sandwiches. The décor is whimsical and charming – try to get seated in the Dog Room!

MATCHABAR

93 Wythe Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11249,

www.matchabarnyc.com

Williamsburg, Brooklyn is a hub for hipsters and is always ahead of the curve, so it only makes sense that it's the home of NYC's first Matcha-only café – known, not surprisingly, as Matchabar. It serves traditional Matcha, as well as modern takes like lattes, 'matchiatos' and iced peach Matcha. There is also an ever-changing food menu that includes crowd-pleasing items, such as Matcha doughnuts and muffins. Next time you are exploring Brooklyn, be sure to stop by for your Matcha fix!

SAMOVAR TEA BARS & LOUNGES

Four locations across San Francisco: The Mission, Hayes Valley, The Castro and Yerba Buena Gardens

www.samovartea.com

The team behind Samovar sees tea as a way to recharge and take a breather from the hustle and bustle of modern life. As soon as you walk in, the scent of spices from the chai tea being brewed in copper pots immediately grabs you and makes you forget about what's going on outside. It would be foolish to get your tea 'to go' here. Instead, grab a seat and let the knowledgeable staff help you find exactly what you are looking for on their well-curated food and tea pairing menu. Samovar offers tea services from all over the world – Japan, England, Morocco, China, India, and Russia.

WOLFGANG PUCK AT HOTEL BEL-AIR

701 Stone Canyon Rd, Los Angeles, CA 90077

www.dorchestercollection.com/en/los-angeles/hotel-bel-air/restaurant-bars/wolfgang-puck-at-hotel-bel-air

If you looking for a way to spend a delightful afternoon in Los Angeles, then head out to the beautiful and hidden oasis of Hotel Bel-Air for its afternoon tea service. The Hotel's slightly on the outskirts of town, towards Topanga State Park, so it may take a bit of time to get there, through the winding hills of Bel-Air, but it's totally worth it. You'll be instantly transported out of rush-hour traffic and into paradise. I recommend sitting outside to relax and take in that sunny Los Angeles weather. Afterwards, explore the hotel's beautiful garden and pond – you may even see a swan or two waddling about!

THE BOULDER DUSHANBE TEAHOUSE

1770 13th Street, Boulder, CO 80302

www.boulderteahouse.com

The Boulder Dushanbe Teahouse in Boulder, Colorado, is one of the most special tea-houses in the US. It was built as a gift from its sister city Dushanbe (in Tajikistan) with contributions from over 40 Tajikistani artists. With its vibrant, hand-carved ceilings in the interior and Boulder Creek running alongside the outdoor patio, the atmosphere here is a perfect blend of Tajikistan and local culture. It serves an afternoon tea every day 3pm–5pm and sources tea from all corners of the world.

CEDERBERG TEA HOUSE

1417 Queen Anne Ave N, Seattle, WA 98109
www.cederbergteahouse.com

Although it's a city that is often synonymous with coffee, Seattle definitely has some amazing tea as well! One place to check out is Cederberg Tea House, especially if you are a rooibos fan! This South African café is known for its traditional-style rooibos lattes made with finely ground tea leaves in an espresso machine. And if you are hungry, there are great authentic bites, such as Bunny Chow and South African meat pies as well as a great selection of sweet treats.

TOWNSHEND'S TEA COMPANY

2223 NE Alberta St, Portland, OR 97211
www.townshendstea.com

What makes Portland such a special city is its sense of community and appreciation for craftsmanship. Townshend's Tea Company captures both! It features an incredibly well-curated tea menu with a cosy, welcoming ambience. With two locations in the city, it's a perfect place to get a sense of Portland's vibe. You can always find friendly locals inside and they feature local art and host shows for local artists and musicians. In the warmer months, they even put on outside catering (tea and food) for a mini-festival every month.

MANCAKES BAKERY

288 Robson St, Vancouver, BC V6B 6A1
www.mancakesbakery.com

Looking for a sweet treat with your cuppa? Pop in to ManCakes in Vancouver's hip Yaletown district. These guys sure know how to whip up a delicious cupcake. With at least 11 flavours daily like Bacon Chili Chocolate and Apple Brie, your taste buds are sure to be intrigued. Park yourself with your drink and cupcake of choice and surf the free Wifi or just spend some time people watching!

THE GREEN BEAN

210 Lakeshore Rd East, Oakville, ON L6J 1H8
www.greenbean.ca

Tucked away in scenic downtown Oakville, Ontario, The Green Bean offers a variety of coffees, teas and treats. This little coffee- (or should we say tea-) house has a lovely patio for enjoying the beautiful summer, and sometimes spring and autumn, weather. You can also bag a table inside or take your tea to go and explore historic Oakville and its lovely waterfront.

ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY

Meet yerba mate (you say, 'yerba-mathey'). Although not strictly a tea, like rooibos and other tisanes (see Herbal teas), the leaves of the mate plant are often prepared in very much the same way as *Camellia sinensis*. Yerba mate is made from the leaves of a holly-like tree found in the rainforests of South America and particularly in northern Argentina, Uruguay, southern Brazil and Paraguay. Mate was first consumed by the indigenous Guarani peoples and also spread to the Tupi people that lived in southern Brazil and Paraguay.

The leaves of the mate tree naturally contain vitamins, minerals, amino acids and antioxidants. In fact, in the 1960s various scientific institutions concluded 'it is difficult to find a plant in any area of the world equal to mate in nutritional value' and that yerba mate contains 'practically all of the vitamins necessary to sustain life'.

Yerba mate is drunk in many South American countries but none more so than in Uruguay and Argentina where it's pretty much the national drink. Many people carry a thermos of mate with them when they are out and about and there are hot water 'refill' stations where the thirsty drinkers can top-up.

Like many foodie traditions, the origins of mate are widely debated, but it's safe to assume that no trip to South America would be complete without experiencing one of the friendliest tea ceremonies around. Yerba mate is traditionally drunk out of a round bowl called a gourd and is often a shared experience as the gourd will be passed around among friends and family for everyone to sip from.

For centuries, rainforest tribes have drunk yerba mate for its ability to rejuvenate and provide focus. As a natural stimulant yerba mate is now becoming ever more widely available, both in its traditional tea form but also in ready-to-drink formats.

While yerba mate is by far the most popular hot drink in Argentina, the country also enjoys traditional black tea and is a major tea producer, ranking ninth in the world in terms of production. Most tea in Argentina is grown in the northeastern provinces of Misiones and Corrientes where the climate is hot and humid and the land relatively flat, which allows for a highly mechanised form of harvesting and production. Argentina exports far more tea than it consumes domestically, with the vast majority going to the United States where it is most often used for iced tea.

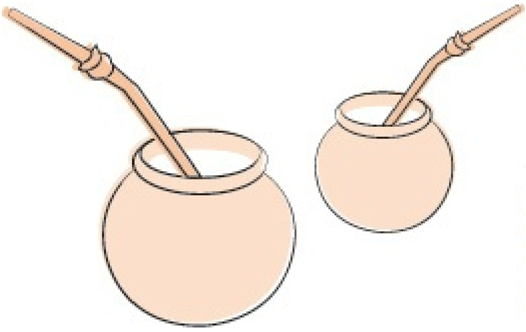
Who knew?

To Argentinian gauchos (cowboys), yerba mate is known as 'liquid vegetable'; while to native forest people it is known as the 'drink of the Gods' as it has helped them survive periods of drought and famine.

HOW TO MAKE: A cup of yerba mate

1. Find a largish round cup (a real gourd if possible) and fill the cup two-thirds with the dried yerba mate leaves.
2. Cover the leaves with a little cold water – this protects the leaves.
3. Next, add hot water to fill the cup and let it steep.
4. Letting the leaves sit at the bottom of the cup, take a straw (a traditional gourd will have a *bombilla,* a straw-like filter) and pass it around.
5. Traditionally, the person preparing the mate known as the *cebador* will drink from the first infusion. They will then refill with hot water and pass anticlockwise between friends or family. When each person has had their fill they pass back to the *cebador* who refills the gourd and passes it to the next in the circle.
6. If you have had enough, say thank you and you won't be passed anymore (careful not to say thank you in advance of receiving or you might remain thirsty!).

Although it's often drunk as a social event, yerba mate can be consumed alone and, like Japanese Matcha, it's common to see students with a thermos of water and a gourd by their side!



CHILE

Chile is the only country in South America that can be called a tea-drinking nation; it's also in the top 20 per capita tea-consuming countries (see Top 20 Tea Drinkers). This may stem from a peculiar teatime tradition inherited from the British, who settled in Chile in the 19th century. Teatime is firmly rooted in the food culture of Chile and there it's known as *onces*. It is said that this term dates back to the time when workers in mines run by the English would stop for tea in the afternoon, but here their tea break was accompanied by shots of *aguardiente*, a fierce 'fire water' (not sure of the wisdom of drinking alcohol and working in a mine!). To disguise what they were drinking, the miners used the word *onces* and it caught on. In Chile today *onces* is as popular as it was a century ago. *Onces* is served anytime between 5pm and 8pm; it mostly consists of a plate full of lovely things to eat (sugary cakes, biscuits, even pancakes with jam and fruit), of course all washed down with a lovely cup of black tea.

BRAZIL

Brazil is well known for its coffee culture, but if you're a tea lover, what would you do there? As a matter of fact, Brazil's tea culture comes from the indigenous cultures of the Amazon, with their infusions and medicinal herbs, and it has evolved since the Portuguese colonial period up to today. In the past five years there has been a spike in the arrival of specialist tea-shops, mostly in São Paulo. Now you can easily order green or white teas, or a tropical combination of tea with fruits and flowers to make it more refreshing and a bit unusual. We've spotted a few places to go and have a nice cup of tea, but be warned, Brazilians don't usually drink tea with milk. Just ask for some milk, if you like a drop of the white stuff, and enjoy it in a nice spot under the sun.

GRAB A TEA.

SOUTH AMERICA

CAFÉ DEL PUENTE

Ernesto Riquelme 1180 B, Barrio Palafitos de Gamboa, Castro 5700315
www.mipalafitoapart.cl

This quaint Chilean tea-house, located in one of Castro's famous *palafitos* (wooden houses on stilts), offers gorgeous views over the water as well as an unrivalled selection of loose-leaf tea and cake! Described as a breakfast lover's dream, if you're in Chile then plan a trip here to enjoy the charming atmosphere and friendly welcome.

LAVANDA CASA DE TÉ

Quebrada Honda, Fundo Santa Marta, Frutillar
www.lavandacasadete.com

A true lavender heaven is the only way to really describe Chile's Lavanda Casa de Té and even then I'm not sure it really gives a true understanding of just how beautiful this place is! The tea-house itself is set among a vast lavender field, offering exquisite views as well as a tea menu of fine teas from all around the world. If you're after a relaxed atmosphere, unrivalled views and fancy taking tea in what is ultimately an adult's doll house, this could be for you! It is incredibly popular, so do book ahead.

AMARANTA TEA HOUSE

Avenida Cristóbal Colón 822 B, Punta Arenas 6200629
www.teamaranta.cl

This serene but cosy tea-house located in Punta Arenas, Chile, offers a number of artisan teas as well as a fab selection of cakes and pastries. Escape from a busy day and revel in some 'me time' here. Enjoy some of their exciting blends of tea, including a fantastic chocolate tea, great for those looking to indulge without the guilt trip!

ALVEAR PALACE HOTEL

Avenida Alvear 1891, 1129AAA Buenos Aires

www.alvearpalace.com
In Argentina, Buenos Aires still holds the traditional 5pm high tea in great esteem, and you can find it served in many of the city's finest hotels. The L'Orangerie restaurant within The Alvear Palace Hotel offers an extremely special afternoon tea, serving just the right kind of fabulous selection of tea and pastries. We recommend trying the hotel's own signature blend of tea, which aims to recreate the essence of the Alvear Palace Hotel!

TEALOSOPHY

Gorriti 4865, Buenos Aires
www.tealosophy.com
A tea-lover's dream – this unique little tea-shop rivals an old English sweet shop, but for tea! Each wall is covered from floor to ceiling with their vast range of teas; each in an individual tea caddy. The phenomenal aroma will hit you as soon as you walk through the door where the knowledgeable staff will be more than happy to help you choose your signature blend. A must for any tea fanatic!

TEA CONNECTION

Alameda Lorena 1271, São Paulo
www.teaconnection.com.br
This Argentinian tea-house chain has branched out in Brazil, Mexico and Chile; it opened its first shop in São Paulo in 2010. Now, with two branches, you can choose from a nice range of tea blends and a great selection of fresh and healthy food that changes with every season. And the good thing is that if you're not sure how long to brew your tea, a chronometer will come with your teapot so you'll know exactly when your tea is ready. Genius!

THE GOURMET TEA

Rua Mateus Grou 89, São Paulo
www.thegourmettea.com.br
On arrival into this Brazilian shop you can tell it's something different; it has a unique concept, with its multicoloured fold-out panels to reveal all kinds of tea treasures. With a great variety of teas displayed in cute and colourful tins, Gourmet Tea offers a menu with organic and fresh options, with bread and pasta made daily in their kitchen.

AUSTRALIA

Billy tea on the boil.

Pioneering tea growers, a cosmopolitan tea culture reflecting this continent's history and location, and a neat little invention that has become a Kiwi legend – that's what Australasia is in terms of the world of tea.

A form of tea from a plant called 'ti tree' was drunk by Aboriginal Australians long before the country was 'discovered' by foreigners, but tea as we know it (*Camellia sinensis*, see What exactly is tea?) was introduced to Australia by the Brits. Tea was part of the cargo on what's known as the First Fleet, a flotilla of 11 ships that landed in Botany Bay in 1788 (having set off from Portsmouth, England, in May 1787) carrying a more famous 'cargo', that of over 1000 convicts.

Australia is also a small producer of tea and the history of tea growing there reflects the battling, pioneering spirit of the nation. In the late 1880s four young brothers, the Cutten brothers, planted tea, spices, coconuts, coffee and numerous other tropical crops in an area that became known as Bingil Bay in tropical Northern Queensland. They suffered many trials and tribulations in attempting to establish a viable tea-growing business, but sadly in 1918 they were finally thwarted by a massive cyclone and tidal wave that hit the area destroying all of their crops.

That could have been the end of tea-growing downunder but in 1958 Dr Allan Maruff, a migrant from India, planted tea seedlings in the area again and the first commercial tea-growing business in Australia was born. At the time, he discovered some of the remaining tea bushes from the earlier Cutten's attempts to cultivate, which by now had grown into trees some 15 metres (49ft) high! Again, he faced many challenges, one of which was how to harvest the crop as there were no supplies of labour in the area to pluck the tea leaves. So, Dr Maruff and a team of engineers developed mechanical harvesters to overcome this problem. He also built the first tea-processing factory in Australia, but sadly the venture was not a commercial success and the operation was closed down. Over the years, though, new investors were found and the business flourished. Today there are over 405 hectares (1000 acres) of tea cultivation in the area, producing 1.5 million kg (3.3 million lb) of black tea for consumption throughout Australia.

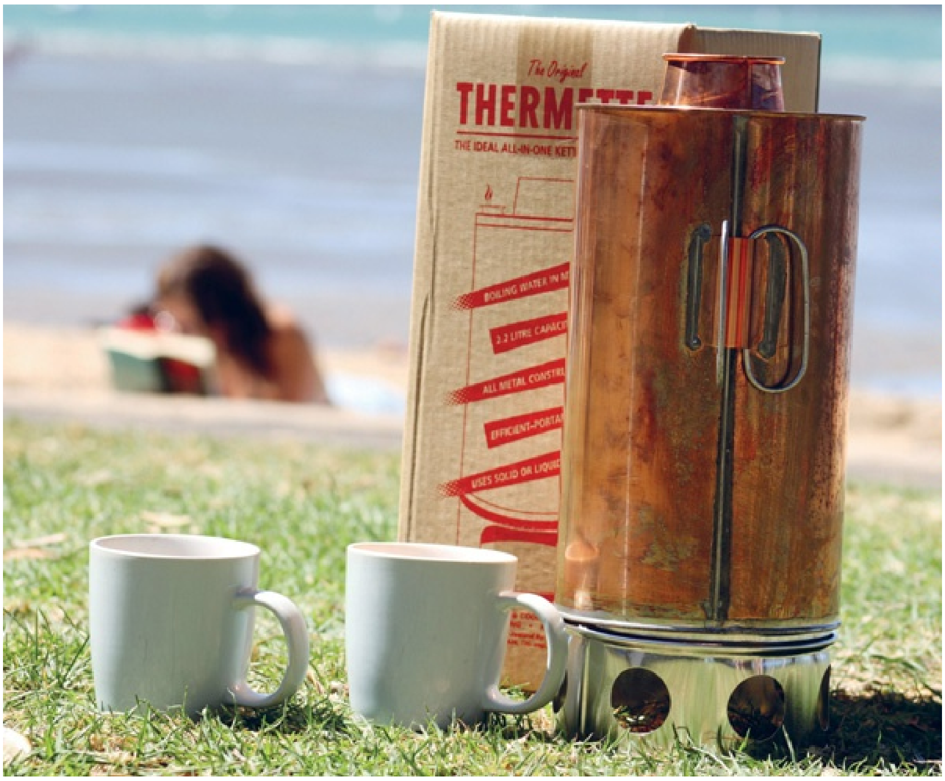
There is also some tea cultivation in New South Wales. In 1978, a third-generation tea planter from Sri Lanka called Michael Grant-Cook chose the Tweed Valley for its ideal climatic conditions and geographical resemblance to Assam, India. Tea here has flourished and in the late 1980s growers produced the first green tea in Australia. Green tea, specifically Japanese Sencha-style tea, is also produced in the upper reaches of the picturesque Kiewa Valley at Tawonga, Victoria.

The tea market in Australia reflects the modern cosmopolitan nature of its society. Traditional black tea with milk in the British style still predominates but green tea consumption is increasing, reflecting more of an Asian influence and, what's more, herbal infusions are also on the up, especially in the vibrant coffee bar scene that has developed in many cities, such as Melbourne.

Who knew?

Billy tea is the term used for making tea in a billy can (a lightweight cooking pot), made famous by the ill-fated swagman of *Waltzing Matilda* fame. 'Billy up the fire' basically means 'put the kettle on'.

NEW ZEALAND



Classic Thermette brewing.

Back in the late 1800s, New Zealand consumed more tea per capita than anywhere else in the world. The tea habit had started with tea being traded by the Chinese in return for seal skins. As the influence of the British Empire grew and tea cultivation developed in India and Sri Lanka, imports from those countries dominated. The tea culture developed very much along the same lines as in Britain, with tea gardens and the temperance movement both playing important roles.

This strong tea culture led to the invention of one of New Zealand's cultural icons – the Thermette. Invented in 1929 by John Hart, this device can boil enough water for 12 cups of tea in just 5 minutes using twigs or other combustible materials gathered from the great outdoors. 'The stronger the wind, the better it boils,' was one of Hart's early slogans, because wind sucks air up through the conical chimney inside the boiler from the base where the fire is lit. The sucking action makes the fire roar, and the heat is transferred not only to the base of the Thermette, but through the heated air rushing up the internal chimney. No heat is wasted; that is why the Thermette is so efficient. The Thermette became standard issue for the New Zealand army during the Second World War, where it became known as the 'Benghazi boiler'. While they aren't as widespread as they once were, the Thermette is still used by the New Zealand army and is still manufactured and sold to this day to tea drinkers who want the outdoor experience for brewing their tea.

THE HISTORY OF TEA

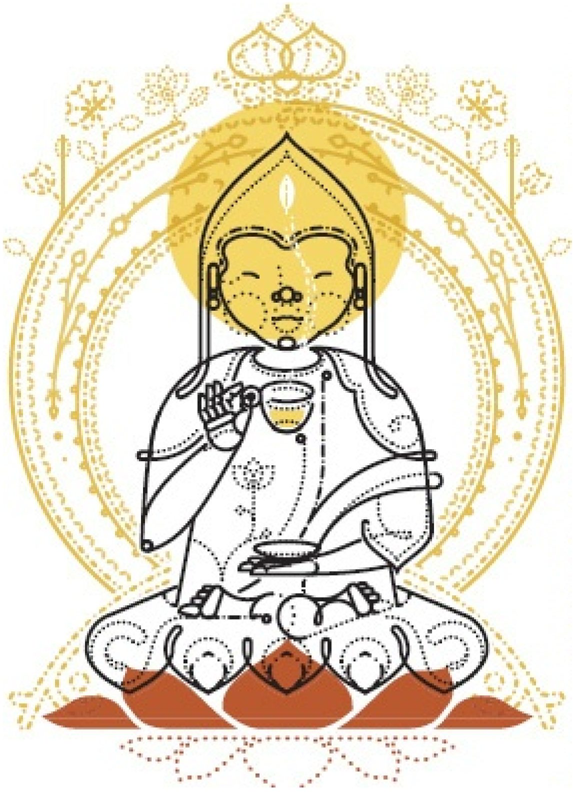
Lemongrass and ginger tea.

A tea timeline

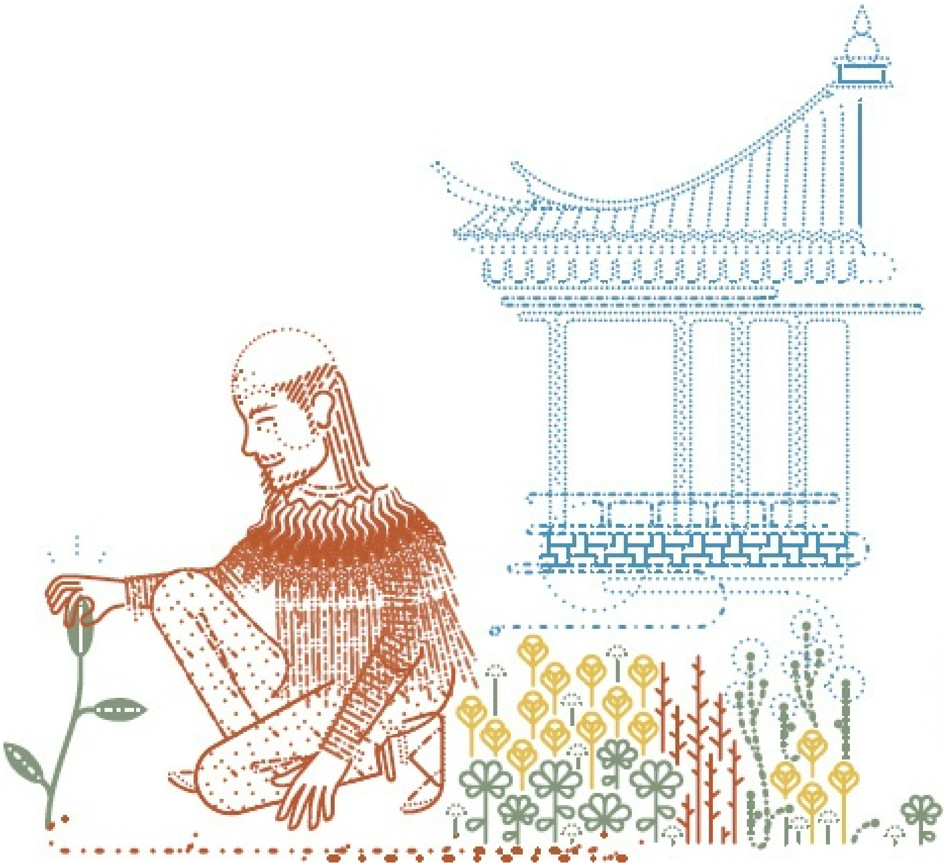
As the second most drunk beverage in the world (after water), tea has obviously been around a while in order to establish its global fame. Its history involves revolutions, wars, political intrigue, the establishment of major trading routes, huge corporations and plays no small part in the social history of many of the countries where it is popular. So, where did it all start?

LEGENDARY START

If tea is a legendary drink then its story must start with a legend, and it does. Way back in time, 2737BC to be precise, the leaves from a *Camellia sinensis* bush accidentally fell into a cauldron of boiling water belonging to Chinese emperor and herbalist Shen Nung. So impressed was he with the resulting brew that this new-found tea fast became a staple in Chinese culture.



Over many centuries, cultivation of and trading in tea grew as did the importance of it in Chinese culture, as witnessed by the numerous ceremonies associated with its preparation and consumption. In the 8th century the first known book about tea was penned by a writer called Lu Yu; the book had a snappy little title, *Ch'a Ching,* roughly translated to *Classic of Tea*. It was around this time, too, that Japanese Buddhist monks studying in China took the beverage back to their homeland and thus initiated what was to become another huge ceremonial tea culture that continues to this day.

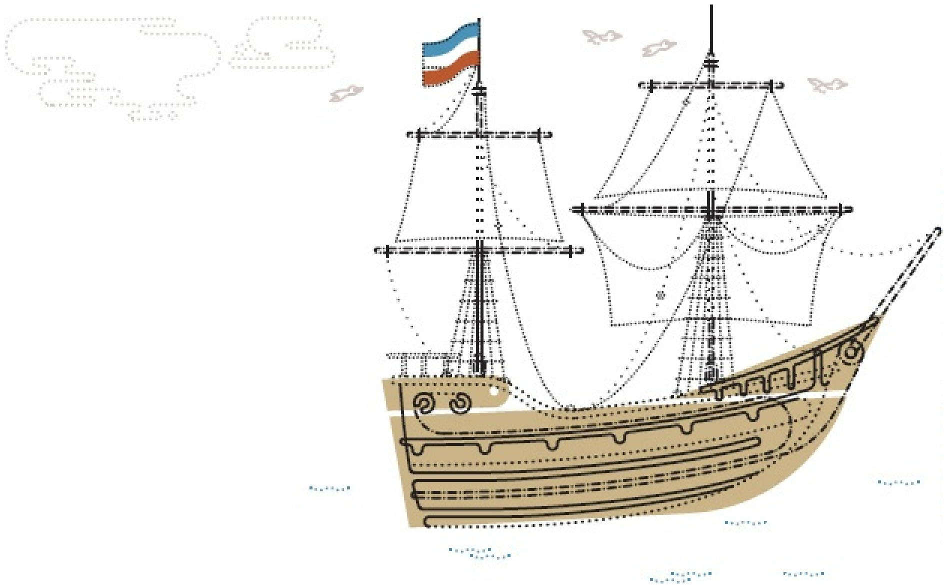


Who knew?

Lu Yu’s publication in 8th century China stated that there needs to be 24 implements used in the making of tea. No simple kettles or mugs would do in those days!

TEA TRADE IN EUROPE

The European fascination with tea didn't begin until the early 17th century. Early Portuguese traders were probably the first Europeans to bring back tea from Asia, and it then became the beverage of choice in court circles. But it was the Dutch who were the first to start importing commercial quantities of tea in 1606 from their outpost in Java. Tea then started to be traded throughout many regions in Western Europe.



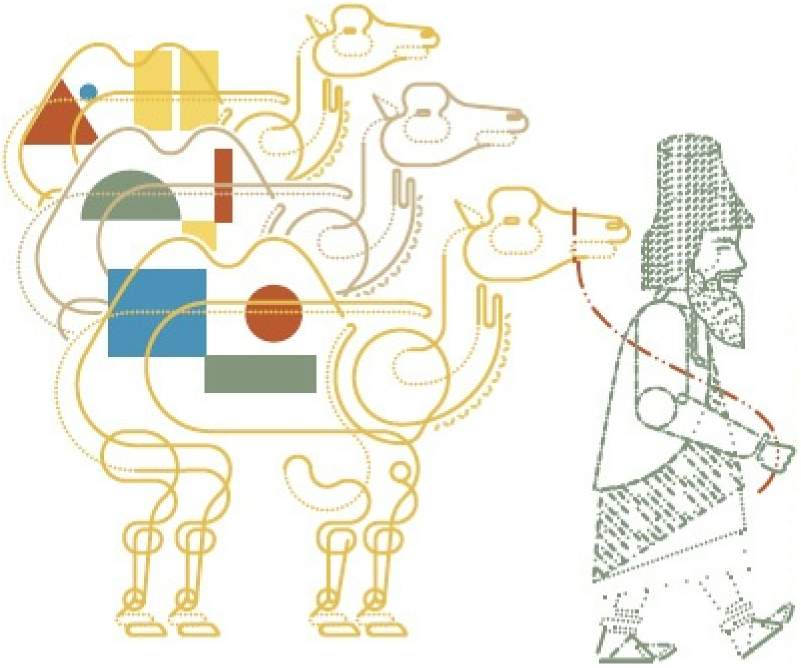
TEA COMES TO ENGLAND

In England, tea arrived a little later. In 1658 there is reference in a London newspaper of the time, *Mercurius Politicus,* to that 'China drink' being on sale at a coffee-house in the City. At this time, tea was certainly not well known and appeared very much as a novelty item on coffee-house menus (that still applies today in some coffee bars!). Due to the fact that it had to travel thousands of miles to Europe, tea was expensive and affordable only by the aristocratic set.

Tea really started to make an impression in England when Catherine of Braganza, an early day tea addict, married Charles II in 1662. She'd developed her habit in Portugal but it soon spread to the court of King Charles II. This was truly the time when to be fashionable, one had to drink tea! It was during this time, too, that Charles gave the monopoly for trading in the 'East Indies' to the East India Company, who became crucial to the cultivation and trading of tea over the next centuries. The city of Bombay (now Mumbai) was 'gifted' by Charles to the East India Company; to this day, Mumbai is a crucial player in the world of tea.

THE RUSSIAN CARAVANS

Most of the tea that came to Western Europe came by merchant ships, but for Russia the story was very different. Again, it was the late 17th century when tea started to be traded in Russia via the 11,000-mile trading route known as the Silk Road. The tea was transported in 'caravans' that consisted of up to 300 camels, in a journey that could last up to 16 months. It is said that the Russian preference for 'smoky' tea comes from the fact that the tea transported via this method was tainted by the smoke from the campfires; tea picks up nearby flavours. As in Western Europe, tea was very much the beverage for the wealthy few due to its high expense.



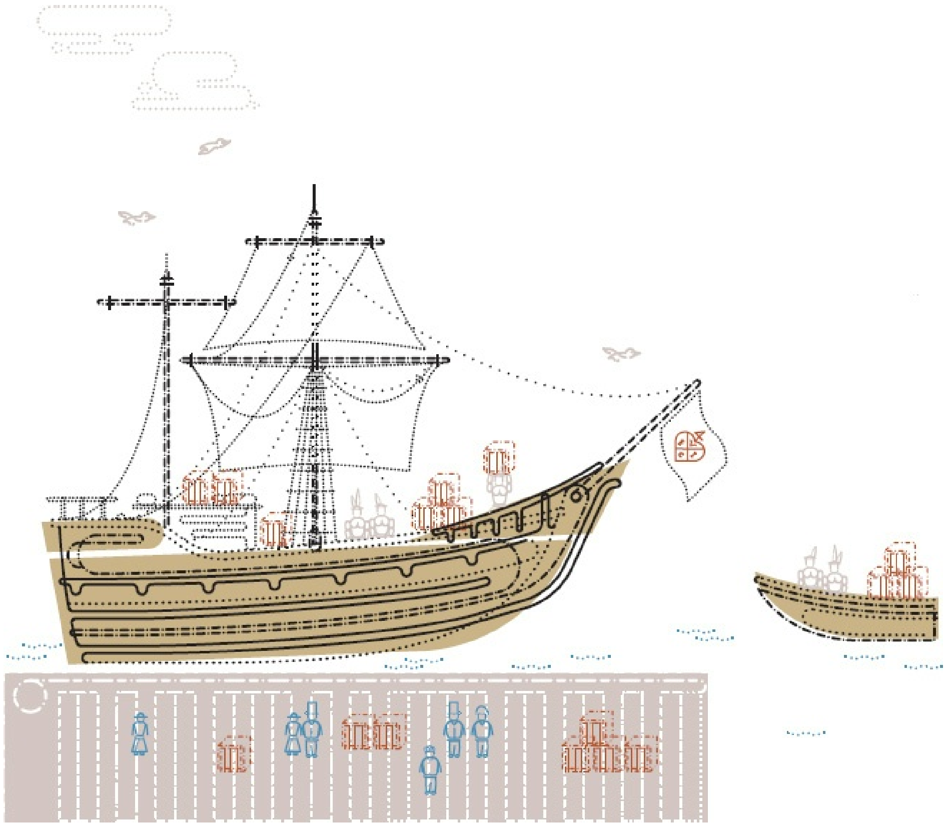
Who knew?

In the 1700s there was quite a debate about the suitability of tea for the working classes. A pamphlet published in 1758 entitled *The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Consider'd* made out that tea was fine for middle and upper classes but not so for 'persons of an inferior rank and mean abilities'. Snobbery at its worst; there was, of course, no meaningful reasoning to back this up. No airs, no graces, just fine tea for all, we say!

TAX

TAXES, SMUGGLING AND REVOLUTION

As with any product that is both expensive and popular, governments realised that there was money to be raised by taxing tea. Tea was first taxed in England in 1689. The high duties imposed and the growing popularity of tea led, of course, to a black market. The smuggling of tea became more and more prevalent to a point where more tea was smuggled in than was legally imported. One of the results of this was that the East India Company not only had reduced profits but also large stockpiles of tea. To help them, the British government granted exclusive trading rights in tea to the America colony, which also included the right to collect tax. To cut a long story short, this decision helped drive the revolutionary fervour in America where the local people rebelled against the imposition of taxes by 'colonial masters'. The Boston Tea Party on 16th December 1773, where tea from boats belonging to the East India Company was thrown into the harbour waters, is probably one of the best-known historical moments associated with tea. The stir that this event caused would ultimately lead to the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence in July 1776.



DODGY BUSINESS, POLITICS AND A WHOLE LOT OF TEA

An awful lot of bad stuff went on in the 19th century, some of it connected to tea and usually to the East India Company. It would probably take a degree course to go through it all but essentially they got very greedy with taxes, bought lots of tea from China, didn't want to pay for it in silver so resorted to dealing in opium, which led to the first opium war with China (1840). Phew! As trading with China lessened, they started planting tea in India where they had far more power; too much in fact and eventually the British government took control. But the legacy of tea planting really took hold both in India and in Sri Lanka, with acres and acres of land being planted mostly by enterprising Scots and English people. To this day, the tea-estates of Assam, Darjeeling, Southern India and Sri Lanka owe their existence to the pioneering vision, hard work and tenacity of these early planters and, of course, to the ever-increasing global consumption of tea; nowhere more so than in Britain where lower taxes (at last!) and increased availability meant that tea was now drunk not just by the aristocracy but by the nation as a whole.

THE RISE OF THE TEABAG

Global tea consumption continued to grow throughout the 20th century. Major companies, such as Lipton, Lyons and Brooke Bond, developed tea brands and teashops in numerous countries. In the US the almost accidental invention of the teabag (around 1908) led to tea becoming more popular due to it being easier and less messy to make. Thomas Sullivan, a New York tea merchant, sent samples of his tea to customers in small silken bags, which were mistakenly used by customers to actually brew the tea. Realising he was on to something, Sullivan improved the bags, eventually using paper to contain the tea. It wasn't until the 1950s, after rationing from the Second World War had finished, that teabags were introduced into Britain by Tetley. After a shaky start the British tea consumer became a fan of teabags, they were after all so much more convenient. They are now used the world over, though loose tea does still play a big role in many tea cultures. Today, the teabag continues to be popular, but some manufacturers are experimenting with other shapes of teabag and other materials to contain the tea, other than paper.

Who knew?

George Orwell, better known for his political novels also wrote a very important piece about how to make the perfect cup of tea, involving 11 golden rules. Not sure we'd be too relaxed making him a brew!

TEA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

So, some 4700-odd years after those leaves fell into the pot of Emperor Shen Nung, and despite the challenges of coffee, beer, wine and soft drinks to name but a few, tea continues to play a major role in the world and in modern-day society. The use of herbal teas or tisanes, also steeped in centuries of tradition and folklore, along with the ever-popular brews from the tea plant *Camellia sinensis* mean that more and more people are enjoying the delights of tea, whether it is hot, iced, in a naughty cocktail or two or maybe even as an ingredient in cooking. There is also an increasing trend towards tea bars in cities worldwide where tea lovers can enjoy their favourite brew while connecting with people all around the globe.

TEA HISTORY AT A GLANCE

2737BC
Tea discovered by Emperor Shen Nung in China.

8TH CENTURY
Chinese writer Lu Yu writes Ch'a Ching, the first-ever book on tea.

1607
First major import of tea from Asia to Europe by the Dutch.

1658
The first mention of tea published in a paper referring to the 'China drink' in a coffee bar in the City of London.

1662
Tea addict Catherine of Braganza marries Charles II and tea starts to become popular (within court circles only) in England.

1680–90s
The Silk Road caravans establish a tea trade with Russia.

1689
The first tea tax is levied in England.

1773
The mother of all tea parties happens in Boston.

1784
Tax on tea is dramatically reduced by the British government, from 119% to 12%; unsurprisingly, legitimate tea sales grew.

1839–1842
The first opium war rages between China and Britain – a result of dubious business practices.

1850s
Tea planting expands into India and Sri Lanka.

1888
British tea imports from India exceed those from China for the first time.

1908
The invention of the teabag by Thomas Sullivan.

1980s
Invention of the pyramidal mesh bag by NASA/Fuso industries in Japan for whole-leaf green tea.

2015
Tea remains the number one hot drink in the world.

FROM PLANT TO POT

White tea.

What exactly is tea?

Tea pluckers in Darjeeling, India.

All tea comes from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant; you'll see later that when we talk of rooibos or herbal teas these are really tisanes or infusions. So, if it's called tea, it must come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant: a sub-tropical evergreen plant – related to the camellia, which can be found in gardens. There are two main varieties that are recognised: *Camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis* traditionally found in China and *C. sinensis* var. *assamica* traditionally found in Assam, India (the clue is in the species name).

But the type of camellia is just the start of it. Like wine, tea is divided into regional and individual estate varietals (up to 1500) and manufacturing styles, all of which contribute to the huge variety of tastes and colours of different teas. For example, you will only find the very best Darjeeling black tea growing in the foothills of the Himalayas. Alternatively, the traditional fermentation and drying methods uniquely used in Taiwan produces the special flavour of Tung Ting oolong.

All tea starts off as buds or leaves on a tea bush but with the way it's plucked and processed you can end up with a staggering array of different teas, from white tea to dark pu-erh tea. We think it is amazing that one plant can produce so many unique flavours and tastes. The taste variation starts in the growing of the plant – the location, the soil, the altitude and the weather patterns (see also How is tea grown? and Where is tea grown?). The way the leaves are treated after plucking changes the final flavour of the tea; there is a whole vocabulary dedicated to describing tea flavours – see our attempt to simplify tea-geek speak.

A good tea is a well-made tea – one that has been looked after and finely crafted. Very generally tea estates have to choose between making large volumes of 'alright' tea or a smaller amount of something really top-notch. If they choose the latter they will only pluck the best leaves (the freshest shoots from the top of the bush) and process them very delicately ensuring that they don't damage the leaf. (More on this later, see The journey of a tea leaf.)

Camellia sinensis var. *sinensis*

LIKES Cold and steep mountains (up to 2600m/8530ft)
MAKES Tiny, delicate leaves for mostly green, white and Darjeeling teas
NATIVE TO China
HEIGHT 1.5–4.5m (5–15ft) if left to its own devices Leaf size 5cm (2in)
SEASON Because it is clinging to a mountainside, the growing season is spring/summer
PLUCKING About five times a year

Camellia sinensis var. *assamica*

LIKES Rain, warmth and space to grow
MAKES Black tea; big, tough leaves more similar to the garden camellia; used in all the big tea-growing regions (India, China)
NATIVE TO Assam, India
HEIGHT Up to 18m (60ft)!
LEAF SIZE 20cm (8in)
SEASON All year
PLUCKING Every 8–12 days!

How is tea grown?

Green leaf tea being weighed.

As tea has been grown and harvested for hundreds of years, the arrangement of tea bushes and their plucking – that's the correct term for the picking of the leaves – is now down to quite a fine art. For instance, every tea bush is grown from a cutting or clone, which is carefully nurtured in nursery beds until it and all of the other clones are ready for planting out; a process that can take six to eight months. Young bushes are planted about 1.5 metres (5ft) apart in rows with a distance of 1 metre (3⅓ft) between each row. In the higher altitudes, these rows follow the contours of the hills or mountainsides or are grown along terraces to avoid eroding the soil. Tea bushes are allowed to grow until they're about 1 metre (3⅓ft) high and then they're kept at that height, which makes for easier plucking.

The tea bush itself is trained into a fan shape, with a flat top called a plucking table. This handy area for plucking the best leaves spans an area of about 1 x 1.5 metres (3⅓ x 5ft) and it takes between three and five years of plucking and shaping to come to full maturity, meaning that tea can then be produced from the leaves. The *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica* is harder to train; you are fighting its natural desire to become an 18-metre (60-ft) tree – but when it reaches 50cm (20in), its centre stem is cut to push the growth outwards rather than upwards.

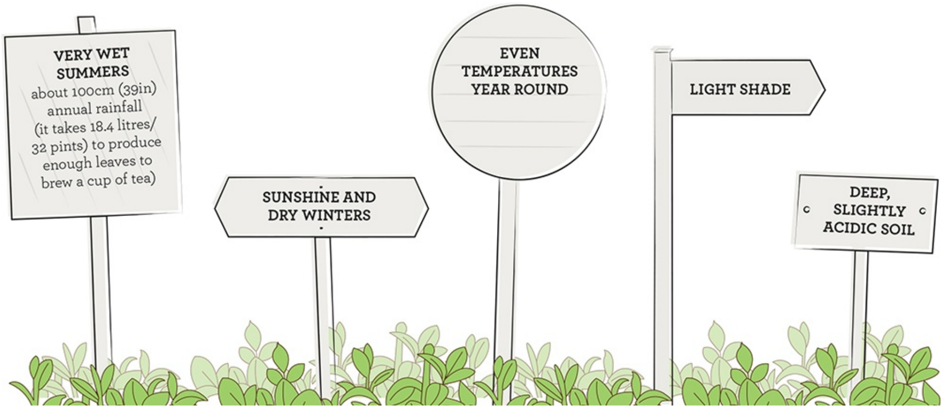
Once the tea bush is up and running and has its plucking table established, the bushes are plucked at regular intervals. When we say plucked, what we mean is that the top two leaves and a bud are plucked from the sprigs of the plucking table. The regularity of this plucking depends on the variety, location, altitude and weather. Generally, the *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica* is plucked very regularly, mostly by hand, every 7–14 days; however, in peak season when there is a lot of rain, the bushes could be ready for plucking again within just 2–3 days. On the other hand, the *Camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis* is slower growing, partly as a result of the locations it's grown in, is more delicate and therefore much less demanding; it only requires plucking four or five times per growing season.

Tea-plucking seasons vary by the particular varietal of tea grown, the weather and geographical location (see also Where is tea grown? and Top 20 tea producers). Some of the tea-growing regions are seasonal – winter (cold), summer (hot) – while those hugging the Equator tend to have seasons defined by the arrival of rains, which generate flushes of growth.

THE HIGH-TECH APPROACH TO GROWING TEA

Japanese tea production is slightly unusual because of the sophisticated high-tech approach that many Japanese tea planters have. Large areas, particularly around the Kagoshima Prefecture, are harvested by machines rather than people. The tea bushes are pruned to form a fan-like shape rather than the more usual table. These rounded sides work well with the machines. The tea bushes are planted 170cm (67in) apart to allow the machines to move inbetween. The result of this unusual planting is the most beautifully neat rows of tea (see below). Frost is a challenge the world over, but the Japanese use shade, sprinklers and fans (to blow cold air away) to protect their tea bushes – some people may think that this ruins the look of the tea fields but, in fact, it protects the planters' crops from damage. And we're all for top-notch crops.

PERFECT GROWING CONDITIONS FOR TEA


VERY WET SUMMERS
about 100cm (39in) annual rainfall (it takes 18.4 litres/ 32 pints) to produce enough leaves to brew a cup of tea)
SUNSHINE AND DRY WINTERS
EVEN TEMPERATURES YEAR ROUND
LIGHT SHADE
DEEP, SLIGHTLY ACIDIC SOIL

Where is tea grown?

Plucker in Assam, India, taking a rest, shelters from the rain under her umbrella.

In its wild state, tea grows best in regions that enjoy a warm, humid climate with a rainfall measuring at least 100cm (39in) a year – typically, that's the region between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. Ideally, tea bushes like deep, light, acidic and well-drained soil. Given these conditions, tea will grow in areas from sea level up to altitudes as high as (and even above) 2600 metres (8500ft) above sea level. You can find tea growing just off the coast road in Sri Lanka, as well as at Kolukkumalai near Munnar in India, which claims to be the highest tea plantation at 2484 metres (8150ft) above sea level.

The big players in the world of tea growing are China, India, Sri Lanka and Kenya, followed by Turkey, Vietnam, Iran and Indonesia, but this is by no means an exhaustive list: tea can be grown in any area with the right climate and conditions.

As a tea taster a fun list of ‘work trips’ could be drawn up from the lesser-known tea-producing regions – starting with Hawaii. While tea is grown in other areas of the US (Mississippi, Washington, South Carolina), Hawaii has a number of successful tea estates, including the Rainforest Tea estate where tea plants/bushes grow in the shade of the rainforest and on lava rock base (see also Meet the tea maker). Mauritius, one of the smallest tea-producing regions, has grown tea since 1892. Cornwall in the UK is one of the newest tea-growing areas; its microclimate has made growing tea possible since 2000. High up in the Andes of Ecuador, at nearly 914 metres (3000ft) above sea level, tea has been grown since the 1960s; they produce black tea year round at the Sangay tea estate. China is the largest producer of tea – in 2013, it produced 1,850,000 tonnes; meanwhile India came in second with 1,200,040 tonnes.

Who knew?

For the consumption of China’s annual 550 billion cups of tea, China uses 236,588 Olympic-sized swimming pools worth of water.

Who grows tea?

A tea farmer drying tea leaves in Pein Ne Bin village, Shan region, Myanmar.

You may have heard of coffee plantations but when it comes to growing tea much of the world's tea is grown on what are known as tea estates and smallholdings. The difference between the two is mainly one of size.

A smallholding, sometimes referred to as a tea garden, for example, is privately owned and can be as small as 0.5 hectare (1.2 acres) or can cover several hectares. To give you an idea of size, 1 hectare is 10,000 square metres (or 100 metres by 100 metres). Where tea is grown on smallholdings, there are tea cooperatives that build a tea-processing factory central to a group of smallholders. The owners of the smallholdings sell their plucked leaves (called green leaf) to the factory for processing.

A tea estate, on the other hand, is a self-contained unit, often hundreds of hectares in size, housing its own factory, tea-growing area, schools, hospital, staff houses and gardens, places of worship, reservoir and guest houses; see for example the Happy Valley Estate.

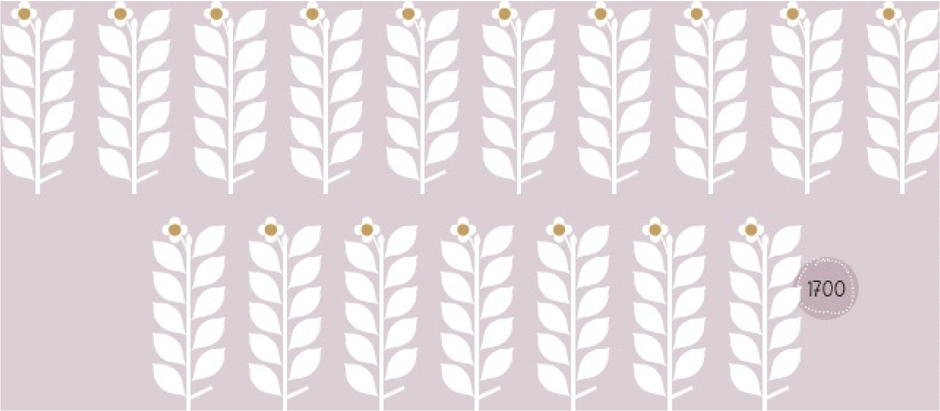
Frequently a tea estate will also accept green leaf from smallholders. So, someone living in a tea-growing region with spare land can begin production and then sell their green leaf to the local tea estate; this is a pretty common practice. The role that a tea estate has in rural communities cannot be underestimated. Tea-growing regions are often remote and lacking in any type of infrastructure. The growing of tea is central to the development of these areas, providing a livelihood and incorporating healthcare and education.

There are large estate groups in the big tea-producing countries, who manage a number of estates. Mcleod Russell is the largest, owning tea estates in India, Vietnam, Rwanda and Uganda – this estate group produces over 100 million tonnes of tea yearly.

> **“There are those who love to get dirty and fix things. They drink coffee at dawn, beer after work. And those who stay clean, just appreciate things. At breakfast they have milk and juice at night. There are those who do both, they drink tea.”**
>
> Gary Snyder, *American poet*

TOP 20 TEA PRODUCERS

Who produces more tea than any other nation? It's China, of course – where tea was first discovered way back in history. This gives the expression 'for all the tea in China' some real meaning. We salute you China for producing so much of our favourite drink. (Figures in metric tonnes; source: UN 2013.)



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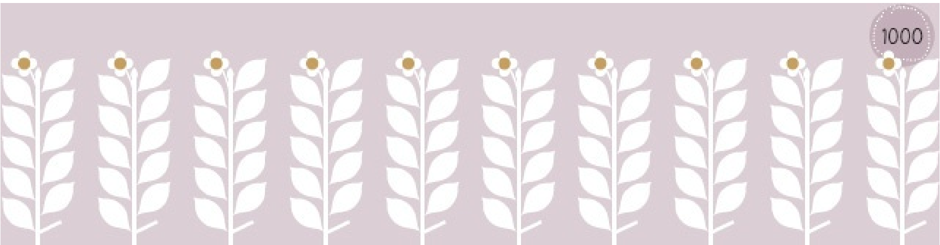

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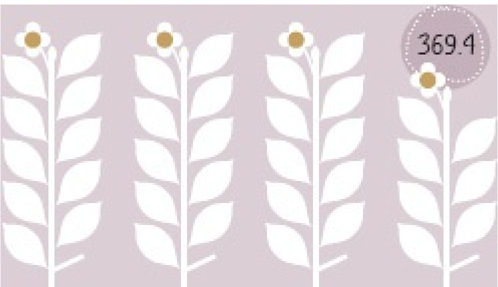

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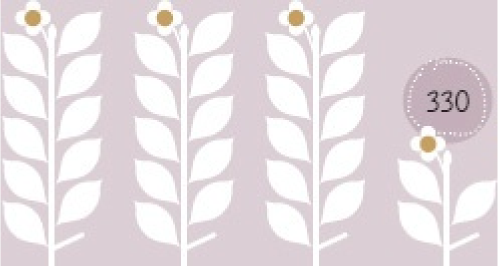

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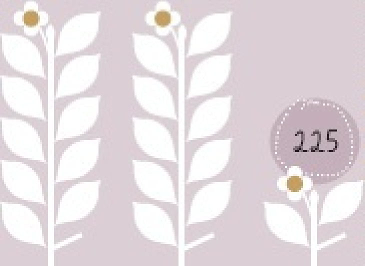

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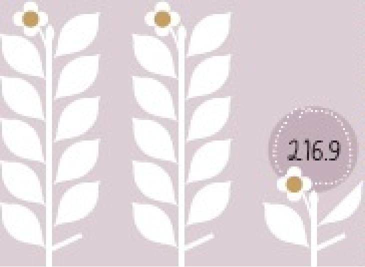

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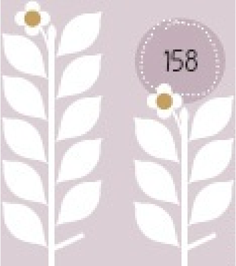

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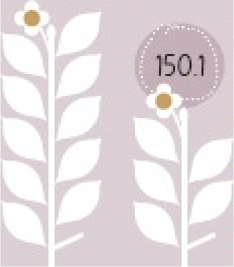

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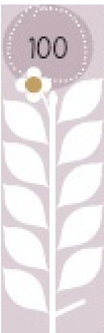

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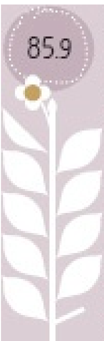
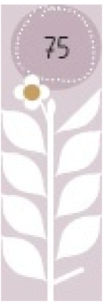
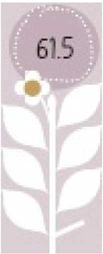


JAPAN



THAILAND



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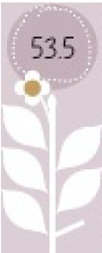
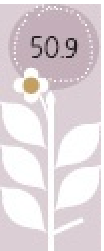
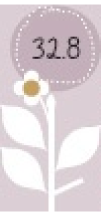


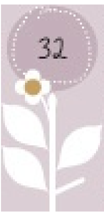
MALAWI



UGANDA



TANZANIA



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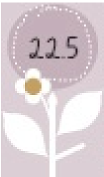

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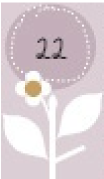

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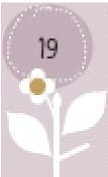
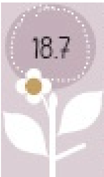


ZIMBABWE

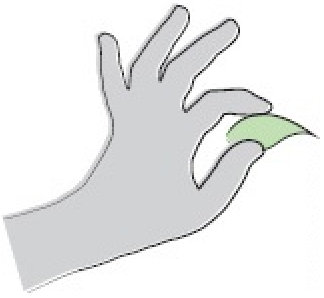


NEPAL

THE JOURNEY OF A TEA LEAF

One of the most amazing tea facts is that all tea comes from the same plant. The transformation from green leaf to 'made tea' (tea that you can actually drink) is all down to the tea experts who process the leaves in tea factories, large and small, around the world. Below, we take you on the journey from small, bright-green leaf to tea in your favourite mug.

Plucking



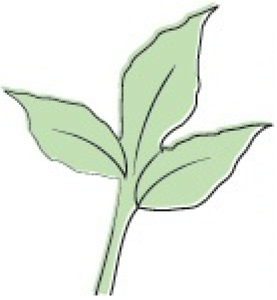
Tea plucking is the most crucial stage as the rule is you can't make good tea from a badly plucked tea leaf. The majority of tea is still plucked by hand – the tea-plucking machines used are not as accurate as nimble fingers. The plucker on a good tea estate is aiming to pick the top two leaves and a bud from the tea bush: these are the fresh shoots. To make sure that the finest leaves are always picked, the pluckers move around the rows of tea bushes in a plucking round – a bit like mowing a lawn, starting on one side and finishing on the other.

The plucked leaves are collected in a basket or bag carried on the back of the plucker, and when this is full it is taken to a collection point where the plucked leaf is weighed and the standard of the leaf is checked. The different quality of leaf is separated (two leaves and a bud/three leaves and a bud, and so on) to make sure the correct standard goes to the factory for processing, or 'making' as tea manufacture is known in the tea trade.

A skilled plucker can gather between 30 and 35kg (66 and 77lb) of plucked leaf in a day – that's enough to produce about 6–7kg (13–15lb) of processed black tea.

Processing the tea once it's plucked is a skilful and time-consuming job. Over the next few pages, we look at all the various 'treatments' a tea leaf could be subject to on its journey from tea bush to teapot.

Withering



The leaves are in the tea factory within 12 hours of plucking and the withering process begins. This is basically when the moisture content of the leaf is reduced – a slightly shrivelled leaf is the result. The leaves are laid over open mesh; in larger factories ambient air is blown under the leaves. The leaves physically wilt and the moisture content of the leaf drops to below 70%. The factory manager won't test this, he will just know! His experience will tell him that when he squeezes the wilted green leaf in his hand whether the moisture content is reduced enough. The physical wither shows that the leaf is now soft, pliable and ready for rolling; the chemical wither, which has occurred inside the leaf itself, means that the aromatics and volatile compounds inside the leaf have been released, which will produce the flavour. The withered leaves are now ready for the next stage of processing.

Rolling

The next stage is all about getting the juicy flavours open to the elements – breaking the leaf. There are two ways to do this – what's known as the orthodox method or the cut tear curl method, or CTC for short.

Orthodox method

This traditional method replicates rolling a green leaf gently between your palms. The leaf is fed onto a rolling table from above, a ridge plate above moves off the table, gently twisting the leaf. The buds retain their shape and do not break – these are the finest tips.

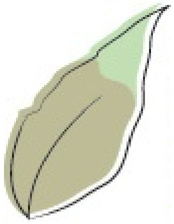
The twisted leaf is then fed over a sorter and the different grades of leaf are sorted; the finest leaf is removed and the second or third sort remain on the orthodox table. The quality decreases the longer the leaf is on the table.

Cut tear curl (CTC)

This process is best for tea destined for teabags, as the smaller surface area means a faster brew. The soft leaf is first passed through a pair of rollers that have tiny teeth, which cut the leaf and roll it into small pieces.

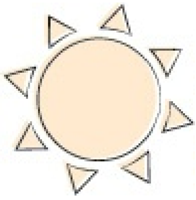
Both orthodox and CTC methods break the leaf and release the enzymes from inside the tea leaves. The enzymes (contained within the remaining moisture of the leaf, a kind of juice really) hold all the flavour and aroma, which will make the tea taste great.

Oxidation



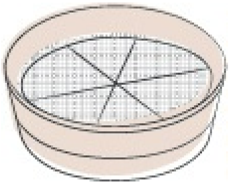
In the world of tea we call this fermentation. Essentially the oxidation process is the leaf turning brown. Much like leaving a freshly cut apple open to the elements, it turns from fresh pale green to brown. In terms of technical details, it's at this stage that the theaflavin and thearubigin chemicals are created. These substances give the tea briskness and strength. It is a delicate balance to get this stage correct; underfermented tea tastes light and green, while overfermented tea can taste stewed.

Steaming, pan-firing or drying



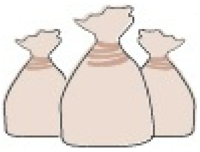
The aim of this last part of the process is to get the moisture content below 3%. This dehydration stops the oxidation process in its tracks and so stabilises the taste of the tea. Whether it's done in a steamer, pan or under the sun depends on the type of tea you want to produce.

Sorting or grading



The bulk tea is sorted by passing through sorters and is graded as: whole leaf, broken and fannings. For more on this process, see Tea geek speak.

Packing

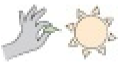


Most of the tea estates still transport the tea in bulk, rather than packing into a consumer-ready product on the tea estate itself. To retain their freshness, the teas are packed into Kraft paper, foil-lined sacks – no more tea chests, I'm afraid. The sacks of tea are then stacked on pallets and then they're ready for sale.

Different tea, different steps

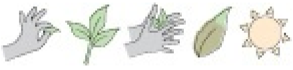
Not all tea is the same. All tea does come from green leaf but what you get at the end depends on the processes the leaf goes through. Here's a handy summary.

WHITE TEA



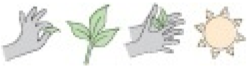
White tea is basically unprocessed tea and is named after the fuzzy white 'down' that appears on the buds. White tea is simply plucked and then left to dry. A bit of oxidation does happen naturally, as it can take 24 hours to air-dry the tea leaves, which explains why some white teas have different coloured leaves – from white to green. White teas should have a very pale green or yellow liquor – they are super-light teas.

OOLONG TEA



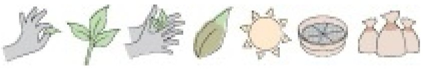
Oolong tea is semi-oxidised and generally sits between black and green tea. It covers all elements of the basic tea production and then some. The rolling and oxidising stages are repeated. The amount of oxidation ranges from 10% to 80% – this can only be broadly assessed by the amount of brown colour in the leaf. The time and complexity involved in making oolong teas is shown in the wow wow wow! flavour that oolong teas have – fruity and flowery.

GREEN TEA



Green tea is plucked, withered and rolled. Heat is applied to stop any oxidation happening – this heat is what makes the tea green. The green leaf is either steamed or pan-fired (tossed in a hot wok) to a temperature hot enough to stop the enzymes from browning the leaf. At the same time as this heating, the leaves are twisted or flattened in the wok. To finish the process the leaf is dried. Green tea is green and its taste profile varies hugely – pan-fried teas taste more toasty while the steamed teas are more vegetable in taste.

BLACK TEA



Black tea covers all the steps too, from plucking all the way through to sorting and packing. The most important stage for this type of tea is the fermentation, when the leaf oxidises. Finally, the leaf is cooked in a giant oven to seal in the flavour.

Who knew?

Some teabag-making machines can produce about 2000 paper teabags in just 1 minute. So, if the machine ran non-stop all day that's not far off 3 million teabags!

Auction houses or private sales

The tea can then take a couple of different routes to the end consumer.

The traditional route for tea is for it to be sold via an auction house. Tea auction houses are in Kenya, Malawi, India (North and South) and Indonesia. Ahead of the weekly auctions, a sample of the batch of tea is dispatched to the various buyers for tasting in advance. The buyers then come together, having earmarked their lots and then bid on the teas lot by lot. The fact that the same buyers are present on a weekly basis results in a wonderfully lively atmosphere!

Some teas are purchased directly between the tea estate and the end consumer. In such sales, predominantly tea brokers are still used; these brokers act as the knowledgeable 'middle men' who understand the quality of the tea and the market. These private sales can be linked to the auction prices or in certain scenarios (most notably, for premium teas) are driven by supply and demand.

Once purchased the tea is then shipped to its final destination, where it will be packed into a consumer-ready format. The majority of teas are shipped rather than air freighted.

In the UK, 96% of tea is consumed in a teabag format, so the majority of tea headed to British shores is destined for a teabag-packing machine before it makes it to the consumer.

Teabags are now produced in a range of shapes to maximise flavour, but loose, whole-leaf tea is clearly the best. Innovations on the teabag front are a biodegradable mesh to contain the leaves, as well as a three-dimensional shape to allow better brewing. See also The evolution of the tea temple.

Types of tea

Chinese tea plucker in Fujian province, picking early season white tea.

If you want to become more of a knowledgeable tea bod or just want to discover some wonderful old stories about tea, then read on. Here, we take you on a whistle-stop tour of all five types of true tea – white, oolong, green, black and pu-erh – followed up by the herbal teas (rooibos, chamomile, peppermint, yerba mate and the like).

WHITE TEA

Tea or not tea? It’s tea as it comes from the *Camellia sinensis* plant
Where is it grown? Fuding, China
How does it taste? Delicate and subtle
How to make? Brew for 3 minutes
How to serve? Hot without milk
What makes it special? It’s hardly processed at all

White tea has almost nothing done to it (see what little happens to it in The journey of a tea leaf). Genuine white tea originates from the Fujian province, in the area around a Chinese city called Fuding. While the city itself is not that exciting (although I had the most amazing fish soup there on one of my visits), the hills and mountains surrounding the city are stunning, and in parts the soft green tea bushes are interspersed with sharp rock faces.

While other regions around the world (for example, Sri Lanka, Darjeeling, Southern India, Kenya and Hawaii) have copied the process of white tea production, it is commonly felt that ‘genuine’ white tea has to come from Fujian province. It has to be said, though, that there are some great and interesting flavours coming from these other regions, too.

The tea bushes grown in this region are a particular cultivar of *Camellia sinensis* called Dai Bai – also known as the great white cultivar. The bushes lie dormant through the winter months until spring arrives between mid-March and mid-April. The tips of the tea bush are picked as soon as the first sign of spring appears. The shoots are coated in tiny, downy hairs – in the past, we have had a few customers complain of ‘fluff’ on their tea, but this is what gives white tea its name and is actually a sign of great white tea!

The first two weeks of production are the most precious, valuable and delicate. The leaves are not cut or allowed to oxidise, they are traditionally dried in the sun but can be dried on racks inside during poor weather. Rain is the biggest danger to the tea as it can damage the delicate leaf at the time of plucking, ideally the leaves are plucked early in the morning in warm sunshine.

The most popular white teas are Silver Needle and White Peony.

SILVER NEEDLE TEA

The top-grade white tea – Bai Hao Yin Zhen – is known as ‘silver needle’ or ‘silver tips’ and is the most expensive tea. This tea looks like silver needles (you’d never guess from the name, would you?!) and are just the shoots or single tips of the tea bush and no lower leaf whatsoever. This tea gives the lightest flavour and clearest liquor of any tea. It tastes slightly sweet, some say like honeysuckle.

WHITE PEONY TEA

Second in line is Bai Mu Dan (sometimes spelled Pai Mu Tan) and translates as ‘white peony’; it gets its name from the way that the tea leaves appear to bloom like spring flowers when the tea is brewed.

This grade of tea has two leaves and a bud. It still contains the silver needle but is accompanied by its two lower leaves. These lower leaves give the tea a stronger and more complex flavour. Again, the leaves are processed in a very delicate way to minimise breakage, which prevents oxidation and helps the leaf to retain its super-light character. Bai Mu Dan’s flavour has slightly more melon to it. Some people prefer Bai Mu Dan to the Bai Hao Yin Zhen because it does deliver a stronger taste.

Who knew?

An old Chinese tale about white tea tells that the tea bushes were plucked for two weeks each year in the spring (true) by young virgins and the tea buds were rolled and dried in the sun (partly true).

Meet the tea maker

Louise meets… Jenny Ruan a white tea farmer from Fuding, China. Her family has been working in the tea business for more than 20 years. Their tea factory was founded in 1992 and is involved in tea planting, processing and research.

- **Where in the world?** Fuding, Fujian province, China
- **At what altitude does it sit?** About 600–1200m (1970–3940ft) above sea level
- **How much tea does it produce?** About 25 tonnes per year
- **How many workers?** About 60 full-time employees and 400 seasonal workers
- **What types of tea are produced?** White tea, green tea, black tea, jasmine tea and oolong tea

Describe your estate?

We grow tea up on the hills around Fuding but it's about an hour's drive to our nearest town, so we are fairly remote.

How have you seen the tea industry change? How have the requirements changed for tea growers?

The tea industry has changed a lot in the past 20 years. Before that, nearly all the tea companies and tea factories were state-owned. Nowadays most of them are private. We see the Chinese market growing rapidly year on year. It seems that tea drinking is becoming ever more popular; and people are willing to pay much more for top-quality teas. It used to be that white tea was mainly exported, but in recent years, the domestic demand for white tea has been high. People believe that drinking white tea is much better for their health than other kinds of tea. On the other hand, it becomes more and more difficult to find workers to do the hard work, such as plucking tea, sorting etc., as the youngsters are all off to the cities.

Can you describe a typical day on the estate?

It's pretty non-stop. There's checking the quality of fresh tea leaves, checking tea processing and tasting the tea, to name but a few jobs. During the production season, we stay mostly on the tea estate to focus on the production. When the production season finishes, we have more freedom. Our tea bushes are plucked from the middle to the end of March – the last two weeks only. People pluck the fresh tea leaves very tenderly by hand and then extract buds one by one. There are somewhere between 25,000 and 28,000 tea buds in 1kg (2¼lb) of silver needle tea.

What do you love about tea?

I think that tea is the most healthy drink in the world. The environment of the tea bushes is free from pollution and the soil is perfect for supporting the tea growth. I like to refresh myself with a cup of good tea. Usually we just drink our own tea, but sometimes we exchange and share some good teas with other friends in the tea business.

Meet the tea maker

Louise meets... Bob Jacobson, President of Hawaii Rainforest Tea and President of the Hawaii Tea Society. Bob has been into tea growing only since 2008 but in that time has instigated the growing of tea in the rainforests of Hawaii along with setting up a non-profit organisation for small tea growers in the surrounding islands.

- **Where in the world?** Hawaii, USA
- **At what altitude does it sit?** About 300m (1000ft) above sea level
- **How much tea does it produce?** In 2014, we produced 15kg (33lb) of white tea
- **How many workers?** At the moment, just me; plus I get occasional workers to help me weed
- **What types of tea are produced?** Organic white tea

Describe your estate?

My farm lies about 15 miles from Hilo, the biggest town on our island, in the middle of a tropical rainforest. To get to the farm, you have to drive along gravel roads through remote areas – there are a few houses dotted around and about – but we're nestled in among fantastic native rainforest, which is growing on lava that flowed 300–600 years ago. We harvest our water from the rain and we power the farm with solar electricity.

What got you into tea?

I founded my farm with my first plantings in 2008. But my journey into the world of tea began as I travelled to tea-growing areas of the world, such as Kenya and China. I had an idea that you could grow tea as an understory crop beneath the rainforest canopy and that such a scale of growing could be undertaken by small family farms; in turn, this would help preserve our natural rainforests.

What is great about the tea grown in Hawaii and why?

Hawaii tea does not become bitter when brewed for a long time; the flavour we produce is unique to Hawaii. It took about two years to find exactly the right handling to give my white tea its superb flavour. The strength of the tea seems to increase each year.

How have you seen the tea industry change? How have the requirements changed for tea growers?

Before now there wasn't much of a tea industry in Hawaii. My tea is a niche product because it is grown in Hawaii, it is certified organic, it is hand plucked and estate processed. It doesn't compare easily to any other tea.

What manufacturing processes do you use at your estate?

I only produce a white tea. It is plucked and immediately heat treated in a 40°C (104°F) oven.

Can you describe a typical day on the estate?

My tea grows on the ground beneath the native ohia and kopiko trees of the rainforest. I weed, pull off flowers, buds and seeds from the 6000–7000 plants that grow on the farm – about 0.6 hectare (1.5 acres). But even the process of weeding delights me: I work with accompanying birdsong and get surprising and brief glimpses of orchids and other rainforest gems that I discover; every day is different.

How often do you leave the tea estate?

I stay on my farm most of the time. I visit other islands in Hawaii to visit family and do business about once a month. In the past I have visited tea-growing areas in China, Taiwan and Kenya, but these days I travel out of Hawaii about once a year for family and business obligations.

What's your favourite cuppa? Do you only drink your own tea?

My favourite beverage is my own white tea. However, I like most teas if they are of good quality.

How do you drink tea? Do you only drink freshly brewed tea?

I drink all quality teas that are available, freshly brewed. I love tea.

What do you love about tea?

Tea gives me the clarity of mind described in the earliest literature on tea. White tea tastes wonderful.

GREEN TEA

Tea or not tea? It’s tea as it comes from the *Camellia sinensis* plant
Where is it grown? China and Japan
How does it taste? From light and floral (good) to astringent vegetable (not so good)
How to make? Brew for 3 minutes
How to serve? Hot without milk
What makes it special? Its amazing diversity

Part of what makes green tea special is its complexity. While green tea is now grown all over the world, China and Japan remain the top producers.

About 75% of green tea is still produced in China, and different regions and individual producers grow very different types of green tea. The country is dominated by small producers, each producing their own take on tea, traditionally produced by hand (and that is still common today). There are styles of tea associated with each region, however each producer has tweaked and perfected their production to give a different result. There are also some lovely stories (true or not, we don’t know but we love them all the same) that have built up over the years that make the Chinese green teas even more magical. Read on to find out more.

The basic process of heating the withered tea leaves to stop the oxidation from happening is what makes a green tea. How this is done defines the tea. Green tea is either steamed or pan-fried to halt oxidation and to keep the fresh-green look of the leaves. Heating removes moisture from the leaf and readies it for rolling, twisting and drying.

There are some big hitters in the world of green tea. First, the Chinese green teas, then the Japanese ones.

CHINESE GREEN TEAS

There are lots of green teas from China, but here we let you in on the secret of our favourite four.

DRAGON'S WELL LONG JING

Originating from near Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province in China, this tea is pan-fried. It's full name is Long Jing, which translates as Dragon's well. The leaf has a distinctive flat needle shape and the taste is sweet and slightly toasty.

MAO FENG

Mostly grown in Anhui and Zhejiang provinces, Mao Feng has a light and peachy taste. To give it its full name, this tea is Huang Shan Mao Feng, which translates as 'downy point of the yellow mountain'.

GUNPOWDER

This is a classic green tea from China's Zhejiang province. Gunpowder tea is rolled by hand into small balls or pellets – making them look like old-fashioned balls of gunpowder. The smoky character of gunpowder is very distinctive; you'll find it's also drunk in Morocco but there is partnered by lots of mint and considerable quantities of sugar.

CHUNMEE

Also known as 'precious eyebrows', Chunmee is a Chinese green tea with a distinctive eyebrow-shaped leaf, originating from Jiangxi province. This tea is less smoky than a traditional gunpowder but tends not to have the complex, delicate flavours of some of the more premium green teas.

YELLOW TEA

This unique Chinese tea starts as a green tea but after the pan-firing the leaves are heaped under cloth. The resultant heat and humidity turns the leaves yellow and gives the brew a mellow, sweet taste.

Meet the tea maker

Louise meets… Shi Hong Fang, Tea Manager at the Yi Xing Ming Ling Xiang Zhen Tea Garden near Li Xing in Eastern China. Unlike some really remote tea gardens or estates, this tea garden is walkable from the nearest village, being about 1¼ miles (2km) away.

- **Where in the world?** Zhang Zhu Yi Xing province, China (about a 2½-hour drive West from Shanghai)
- **At what altitude does it sit?** About 800m (2625ft) above sea level
- **How much tea does it produce?** About 10 tonnes per year
- **How many workers?** 30 workers
- **What types of tea are produced?** We produce mostly speciality Chinese green teas but also some black teas

Describe your estate?

The Yi Xing Ming Ling Xiang Zhen Tea Garden sits within Yi Xing Jiangsu province and not far from the beautiful Lake Taihu – the third largest freshwater lake in China. The tea is grown on an area of 8000 square metres (so, 0.8 hectares or roughly 2 acres). Our year is focussed around the plucking season, which starts on or around April 20–26th every year. We manufacture completely by hand, there is no mechanisation.

What is great about the tea grown in Yi Xing Ming Ling Xiang Zhen Tea Garden and why?

We make very good tea, carefully and closely watching the process from start to finish. The process is very much done by hand, but the weather determines much of the quality of the tea.

Can you describe a typical day on the estate?

All the employees have to work on all the elements of the process. So, the same 30 workers pluck the tea and then work in the factory to process it ahead of selling it.

How have you seen the tea industry change? How have the requirements changed for tea growers?

The tea industry in China is still very traditional, since I have been in the business there have been very little changes and this makes me very happy.

How often do you leave the tea estate?

I spend five days working at the tea garden and then have two days at home; though I'm rarely on holiday but am at home working there.

What's your favourite cuppa? Do you only drink your own tea?

I only drink Chinese green tea and I think Mao Feng green tea is the best.

How do you drink tea? Do you only drink freshly brewed tea?

I like to drink fresh tea from our tea garden. I brew fresh green tea in a Yixing clay teapot and drink it from a glass cup. I don't like flavoured teas but sometimes drink black tea in teabags. A Yixing clay teapot is made of special zisha clay, which contains various minerals found only in Yixing, China. After several uses the Yixing teapot absorbs tea into its walls and becomes coated; this means it holds onto the flavours of the tea and makes a finer brew. Apparently, there is a rule when using these teapots: never mix the tea – always use the same type of tea in the same teapot.

What do you love about tea?

In short, I love tea. Any good-quality green tea is my favourite; I love the fresh seasonal flavours.

Japanese tea bushes are cut by machine and form neat fan-shaped rows.

JAPANESE GREEN TEAS

Leaf being plucked for Matcha manufacture, Japan.

In stark contrast to the small-scale and worker-based production of tea in China, the Japanese have taken artisan tea making to another level with slick mechanization. They are really the only region in the world that still makes good tea but does not do the processing by hand.

SENCHA

Often just referred to as Japanese green tea, Sencha makes up about 70% of the tea produced in Japan. If you look back at the processing of tea, you'll see that steaming is one of the processes. The length of the steam applied to the tea impacts on its taste: a 20-second blast gives a strong aroma and a lighter-coloured cup whereas a longer steam (of up to 160 seconds) gives rise to more broken leaf, a darker-coloured tea and a stronger flavour.

GYOKURO

Gyokuro Tamahomare is its full name, but we call it Gyokuro for short. It's grown predominantly in the area around Kyoto (Japan's ancient capital). Gyokuro makes up less than 1% of Japan's tea production but it's one of its most precious teas. What makes this tea so special? Twenty days before the tea leaves are to be picked, the tea bushes are covered with a curtain of mesh-like fabric. Covering the bushes in this way forces them to raise their production of chlorophyll (the pigment that makes leaves green) and amino acids. The resulting leaves are super-green and rich in a particular amino acid – theanine – which gives the tea a particular sweetness, referred to as *ooi-ka* in Japan.

GENMAICHA

What do you put with green tea to make it go further? Toasted and puffed rice, of course! This tea is a teapigs favourite – we call it ‘popcorn tea’ as it has hints of popcorn – and it’s made on a Sencha tea base. Made for centuries by the poor of Japan who were trying to eke out their supplies of an expensive commodity (tea) by mixing it with a less-expensive ingredient (rice), it is now a staple drink in Japan. The combination of green tea and sweet, nutty toasted rice is becoming popular around the world.

KUKICHA

When we talk of quality tea and making a tasty brew, we normally refer to the plucking of buds and leaves, never the stem of the bush; but we’ll make an exception for this tea. Most commonly Kukicha (also known as Bocha or ‘twig tea’) is a mixture of yellow leaf stems and rich, bright-green Sencha leaf, but it can also be blended with Gyokuro. Some say this tea is like making the best of the leftovers; the resulting tea is a light, not too astringent green tea. And because the stems don’t contain as much caffeine as the leaves, Kukicha is a naturally lower-caffeine drink.

HOJICHA

When is a green tea not green? When it’s brown, of course! Hojicha translates as ‘roasted tea’ and this roasting helps to standardise the flavours of the tea, most commonly Bancha tea. This distinctly Japanese tea collects together the final teas of the harvesting season and then roasts them in a porcelain pot over a charcoal fire; the resulting tea is woody and nutty.

Who knew?

Call us soppy romantics, but we like the story that goes with Mao Feng green tea. It’s said that a young man and a beautiful young woman from a tea plantation were in love, but the local tyrant seized her as his concubine. She escaped, only to learn that the tyrant had also killed her lover. Finding his body deep in the mountains she wept and wept until she became the rain, while her lover’s body turned into a tea bush. Which is why, according to the legend, the area where Mao Feng green tea grows is cloudy and humid the whole year round. All together now… aaah!

MATCHA

A SUPER-HERO AMONG TEAS

Tea leaves growing on a bush, in close up.

Let us introduce you to Matcha – this super-concentrated green tea is ground to a fine powder and is packed with nutrients. We like to think of Matcha as a super-hero in the world of tea.

Genuine Matcha comes from Japan where it has been drunk as a ceremonial beverage by Buddhist monks and royalty for over 900 years. But don't be surprised if you've never heard of it as, until recently, virtually all Matcha has been consumed only within Japan.

Matcha – like all tea – comes from the tea plant, *Camellia sinensis*. What makes Matcha so special is that the leaves are grown under shade for two weeks before picking. This short burst of growth out of direct sunlight causes the leaves to produce lots of amino acids and chlorophyll (the stuff that gives leaves their bright-green colour).

Then, the leaves are steamed and then baked slowly to form Tencha. The stems and veins of the leaves are removed to allow for only the pure leaf to go through to production of Matcha. The Tencha leaves are ground to a very fine powder using special granite stones. Once it's ground, the powder is packed and sealed immediately to preserve all of its wonderful nutrients.

MATCHA'S BENEFITS

Why is Matcha so good for you? The secret is in the way it's drunk. When you drink regular green tea, you throw away the leaves; it's a bit like boiling spinach, throwing away the spinach and just drinking the water – you will get some of the nutrients, but you're throwing away the best bit. With Matcha, you mix the vibrant, nutrient-rich powder into liquid and ingest the whole tea leaf. So, you consume more of that special green tea goodness!

Matcha is believed to give you a slow release of energy that lasts throughout the day while keeping you calm, alert and focussed at the same time. That's why Japanese students drink this wonderful green stuff when they're cramming for their exams and it's also why Buddhist monks drink Matcha to keep them calm and focussed during hours of mediation.

Drinking Matcha is like drinking 10 cups of regular green tea for its nutrient value – that's why we call it super-power green tea; we think it gives you bucketfuls of sprightliness.

MATCHA, MATCHA EVERYWHERE

But what we love about Matcha is how versatile it is. As it's a powder, you can add it to almost anything. In Japan, Matcha is used to flavour popcorn, ice cream, cakes and biscuits.

THE SCIENCEY BITS BEHIND THE BENEFITS

Green tea flavonoids

Matcha contains high amounts of natural green tea flavonoids known as catechins. The major catechin found in Matcha is epigallocatechin gallate, not easy to pronounce but fortunately also known as EGCG. Much of the scientific research into the antioxidant properties of green tea are focussed on how EGCG works within the human body.

Brain power

A Japanese study in 1992 also found that an important amino acid called l-theanine can help improve learning performance, promote concentration and support the immune system.

Slow-release energy

As with all green teas, Matcha contains caffeine, a natural stimulant, as well as the amino acid l-theanine. These two compounds appear to work together to give a slow release of energy; many Matcha drinkers report that they feel alert and focussed for many hours. Much research is being conducted into how L-theanine may help promote alpha brain waves. The good news is that high-grade Matcha contains even more L-theanine as it has been grown in the shade for longer, which boosts the production of this important amino acid.

Healthy skin

Green tea contains polyphenols, this may not mean much to you and us, but the clever people at the University of Alabama have found that consumption of green tea polyphenols can inhibit UV-radiation-induced skin damage. It is well known that the sun's UV rays can damage skin, cause premature ageing and even cause skin cancer. Their study found that these polyphenols can be used to prevent sun-induced skin disorders, helping to keep your skin young and beautiful.

Calorie burning

A lot of scientific studies are looking at the effect that green tea may have on the body's thermogenesis (that is, the rate it burns calories) and on its impact upon fat oxidisation during exercise. There are no conclusive clinical studies but green tea extract is now used in many slimming supplements. Matcha is probably the purest form of green tea extract – and, what's more, it's lovely to drink.

Louise inspecting green tea bushes, under shade, destined to become Matcha powder.

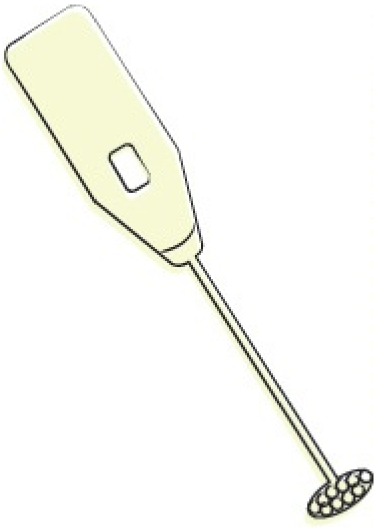
HOW TO DRINK: Matcha, anytime, anywhere

Matcha is incredibly versatile. You can drink it as a hot tea but you can also add it to fruit juices, smoothies and hot or cold milk (see Matcha coconut teashake, Almond matcha latte and Super-power matcha smoothies). So it's easy to get your Matcha hit! Whichever way you choose, here's how to make it.

1 Take ½ teaspoon of Matcha.

2. Add it to your chosen liquid – hot or cold water, fruit juice or smoothie, hot or cold milk.
3. Give it a whisk (electric hand-held whisks work a treat) and knock back!

Because Matcha is a powder, you don't just have to drink it. You can add it to your porridge, cereal or yogurt.



Meet the tea maker

Louise meets... Mr Yoshio Sugita, a Japanese Matcha producer, who says that Matcha 'is one of the most unique and valuable teas in the world'. His company, Aiya, based in Nishio, Aichi, Japan, has been producing Matcha since 1888 and sells Matcha worldwide.

Where in the world? Near Nishio city, Aichi prefecture, Japan

At what altitude does it sit? Over 600m (1970ft) above sea level

How much tea does it produce? 1200 tonnes per year of Matcha

How many workers? 150 full-time workers

What types of tea are produced? Japanese Matcha

What got you into tea?

My family has been in the world of tea for 12 years. I was born into the business and learnt everything about growing, processing and making tea from an early age.

How have you seen the tea industry change? How have the requirements changed for tea growers?

From our point of view, we see Matcha not as a tea, but as a food, because you consume the whole leaf. Accordingly, Matcha is a popular ingredient in different food products throughout Asia. I believe that soon Matcha will become equally accepted in Europe and in the United States of America as a unique flavour and ingredient.

What manufacturing processes do you use at your estate?

Matcha is made from Tencha tea leaves. Tencha is a green tea that is grown under shade, and which is then steamed and baked before being ground into powder. Our Matcha is made by grinding only the flesh of tea leaves, no stalks are included. The grinding takes places in what's known as a cleanroom, where the temperature and humidity are carefully controlled and the air is filtered. The tea leaves are ground to an incredibly fine size – an average grain of Matcha powder will measure just 5–10 microns across (that's 1 millionth of a metre!) and it will take one grinding machine (still using granite) an hour to produce a single 30g (1¼oz) tin.

How do you drink tea? Do you only drink freshly brewed tea?

I like to drink pure green tea from a tea bowl and never ever use teabags. Quality is an essential requirement in the tea I drink.

What's your favourite cuppa?

I drink one bowl of Matcha three times a day.

What do you love about tea?

I believe that tea is a product that is not only good for the health but also has no negative associations. In my opinion, Japanese green tea is an all-round good product. Japanese green tea provides tea farmers in Japan with a sustainable and fair income base. The product itself is delicious, as well as having a high nutritional value.

Tencha leaf pregrinding.

Ground Matcha powder, about to be made into tea in the traditional way.

OOLONG TEA

Tea or not tea? It's tea as it comes from the *Camellia sinensis* plant
Where is it grown? Guangdong and Fujian provinces and Taiwan, China
How does it taste? From rich and fruity to floral and delicate
How to make? Brew for 3 minutes
How to serve? Hot without milk
What makes it special? Its style of manufacture

Oolong (also known as wulong) is a style of manufacture that originates from China (Guangdong and Fujian provinces) but is also huge in Taiwan; nowadays Taiwan tea growers almost exclusively grow oolong tea. We always describe oolong tea as being 'between black and green', which sums up its character: a combination of the flavour of green tea and the strength of black tea.

In contrast to white teas, oolong teas' flavours range from woody dark to very light and floral. The leaves are oxidised and rolled to different degrees to give distinctly different flavours – the percentage of oxidation varies from 10% (closer to green tea) to 70% (closer to black tea). China tends to produce the darker, heavier oolongs. See what processing goes on for oolong in The journey of a tea leaf.

Nick always says it is wrong to have a favourite tea, that it is like having a favourite child. That said, oolong is my favourite tea. We'd like to share a couple of our fave oolongs with you: Tung Ting and Li Shan.

TUNG TING

Also known as Dong Ding and translates as ‘frozen peaks’, this oolong tea is grown in the Nantou region in the centre of the island of Taiwan and is harvested four times a year (April, June, September and November). The Nantou area produces more than half of Taiwan’s oolong tea. The quality can be a bit mixed, but the Tung Ting mountainous region produces some really yummy teas. The leaves are rolled really, really tightly, and the resulting flavour is sweet and very floral. The depth of flavour is long lasting and so the leaves can easily be re-infused several times.

LI SHAN

Grown in the Taichung region in Taiwan, the Li Shan mountain offers a high-altitude growing area for tea at 1980 metres (6500ft) above sea level; Li Shan translates as ‘pear mountain’ as this area is full of pear, peach and apple orchards. There, the tea grows very slowly and so is harvested only twice per year (May and October); compared with the Tung Ting’s quarterly harvests. The taste is heavenly – one of spring flowers, with a rich creamy flavour.

Top-notch oolong tea.

Meet the tea maker

Louise meets… Lim Ying Jiu who grows oolong tea. His tea-estate is a 30-minute walk from the nearest town - Yuchi, which sits right on Sun Moon Lake, the largest lake in Taiwan. He has two farms: the smaller one is a 2-hectare (5-acre) organic farm; the larger one measures 6 hectares (15 acres), is mountainous and is not yet certified organic.

Where in the world? Near the Sun Moon Lake in Taiwan

At what altitude does it sit? The smaller organic farm sits about 300m (984ft) above sea level, while the larger mountainous farm is about 1100m (3600ft)

How much tea does it produce? It varies with each season

How many workers? Most of the year only three or four of us, but up to 50 during harvest

What types of tea are produced? Tung Ting oolong and Gong Fu black tea (it's a ruby tea due to the cross of tea bushes used)

Describe your estate?

My estate is in the mountains. The area around it is green and picturesque; from the top of the estate you can see Sun Moon Lake. I have plans for expansion too.

What got you into tea?

My family has been growing oolong tea for a number of years, so four years ago I decided to start growing tea myself. I was mentored by Master Aoenes, a tea master made famous for popularising black tea in Taiwan. We experiment with different production methods and new tea varieties.

What is great about the tea grown in Taiwan and why?

I use an organic microbe fertiliser, which breaks down organic material into a more usable form for the plants, and it also treats and decomposes the soil. The air here is humid and hot and there's lots of rain. So, it has a similar climate to where Assam tea is produced in India. However, due to the combination of Assam and Taiwanese bushes, the tea is a brighter reddish colour.

How have you seen the tea industry change?

The tea industry in Taiwan has traditionally been export-orientated, but now there is rising global competition and tea exports from Taiwan have been declining. The costs of growing tea is increasing for a number of reasons, and it's harder than ever to find young tea workers. Tea is a tea grower's life, though, so we have to face the difficulties.

What manufacturing processes do you use at your estate?

I use mostly orthodox methods, though I have started to introduce more innovative methods, such as using aerodynamics for tea withering. My factory is a small-scale family factory, because I love quality tea.

Can you describe a typical day on the estate?

If it's not harvest season there's not too much work to be done. I only need to visit the farm three times a day to water the leaves and do some weeding. During the plucking season, I'll have 30–40 extra staff to help pluck the leaves and a further four to eight people to help process the tea. The pluckers start at 7am and work until 3pm, unless it is raining in which case they can't work. We usually harvest between 1000 and 1200kg (2200–2645lb) of tea per day. The tea processing begins as soon as the first batch of tea leaves is in, usually 8am and carries on until 6pm the next day. Withering the tea leaves takes 12–16 hours and twisting the tea takes 10–12 hours. To give you an idea, 5kg (11lb) of tea leaves usually gives us about 1kg (2¼lb) of tea. This process goes on for about seven or eight days, which can get really tiring.

How often do you leave the tea estate?

I spend most of my time on the farm. It's a full-time job, so I don't ever go on holiday.

What's your favourite cuppa? Do you only drink your own tea?

My favourite tea is my own Sun Moon Lake Black Ruby tea. I usually drink my own but sometimes try out others.

How do you drink tea?

I like to drink tea slowly, anytime and anywhere. I sometimes like to drink 'riper' (fermented) teas, too.

What do you love about tea?

I love tea for its delicate, mild, dainty and fresh tastes. I also love it for its calming nature and Zen quality.

PU-ERH TEA

Tea or not tea? It's tea as it comes from the *Camellia sinensis* plant
Where is it grown? Pu-erh, China
How does it taste? Earthy, strong and smooth
How to make? Brew for 3 minutes
How to serve? Hot without milk
What makes it special? Its history and its super-slow fermentation

Pu-erh is one of the oldest forms of Chinese tea; its use can be traced as far back as the Tang dynasty (618–907). This tea takes its name from the town of Pu-erh in Yunnan province in southwestern China. Pu-erh became the hub of tea trading and all the tea traded there took its name, whatever they were.

Back then, transport was mostly via horse, so the tea had to be packaged in a suitable form and processed to be able to deal with long journeys. The locals of Pu-erh town created a particular way of processing the tea so that it actually improved, rather than deteriorated, with age: they compressed them into 'cakes' (pictured left), which slowly oxidise over time. It's not the tea for impatient people since the best pu-erh tea takes at least 30 years to come to maturity; although fermentation (aka oxidation) can take anytime between 10 and 50 years.

The cultivar grown for pu-erh tea is the Yunnan Da Ye and it's typically harvested in April from the mountains neighbouring Pu-erh town.

> **"Tea tempers the spirits and harmonises the mind, dispels lassitude and relieves fatigue, awakens thought and prevents drowsiness, lightens or refreshes the body, and clears the perceptive faculties."**
>
> Lu Yu, *Classic of Tea: Origins and Rituals*

RAW OR COOKED?

No, we're not talking steak here or even sashimi, but tea. There was a huge demand for pu-erh tea but, because of the super-slow fermentation process, it was expensive and in short supply. So, those in the Chinese tea industry developed a new kind of pu-erh called 'shou pu-erh'; 'shou' translates literally as 'cooked'. To define the original kind, it was given the name 'sheng' or 'raw'. Unlike the sheng's 10–50 years of fermentation, the shou pu-erh could be ready in 45–60 days; it was designed to be drunk straightaway (no waiting around for years with this brew) to fulfil the desires of all those people demanding pu-erh tea! Now, that's what we call fast.

For pu-erh teas, the leaves are processed as for a green tea (see The journey of a tea leaf) but they are not completed with a firing. Instead, the teas are left to age and develop, fermenting very slowly. As we mentioned earlier:

- sheng pu-erh continues to age at home; this one gets better with time
- shou pu-erh are dried to halt the fermentation and can be drunk immediately.

Before the leaves are compressed into a 'cake', traditionally a piece of paper with a trademark or *nei fei* is popped on top just before the tea is compressed. The trademark contains the information about where the tea was grown and processed. And the shapes of 'cake' are not just round, flat cakes – though those do have some lucky Chinese symbolism – but they can be compressed into all manner of shapes, from a brick to a nest to a mushroom or even a pig! Pu-erh is a traditional (read, expensive) gift.

An unwrapped cake of pu-erh tea.

An array of pu-erh cakes wrapped up and stacked in piles.

BLACK TEA

Tea or not tea? It's tea as it comes from the *Camellia sinensis* plant
Where is it grown? India, Sri Lanka, China and Africa
How does it taste? Aromatic, strong and full of flavour
How to make? Brew for 3 minutes
How to serve? Hot with or without milk; iced with lemon (and sugar!)
What makes it special? Its level of fermentation; it's fully fermented

In Britain, black tea is so 'regular' that it is often referred to as normal tea – shame on us because the reality is it can be far from normal; the Chinese, by the way, call this tea *Hong cha* or red tea. Black tea (as we learned earlier, see The journey of a tea leaf) is fully fermented. The big differences in types of black tea relate to its method of processing – whether it follows the orthodox route or the CTC (cut, tear, curl) route. Orthodox processing keeps the leaves larger and twisted and allows for more complex and delicate flavours in the tea, whereas CTC leaves are smaller and round, giving a stronger colour and flavour to a brew.

The big players in black tea are East Africa and Southern Asia. Within those regions there are areas that produce very different styles of black tea, for example in India – Darjeeling and Assam. Another big producer is Argentina, where they produce a clean, very black leaf tea, which tends to be used in the US for iced tea due to its clear light liquor and simple flavour.

In the world of black tea, the production process can be fast and slick – for instance, plucking to sorting can all be done within a day. While a factory may be automated, the art of good tea making is still down to a team of knowledgeable experts; the tea world has its fair share of these. There are many regional (and local) specific styles of manufacture, which are handed down the generations of tea masters!

GET THE BASICS OF TEA GRADING

When it comes to tea there's so many grades – from top-notch large leaf pieces with light colour to dusty particles with strong, dark colours – the tea industry have created a language of their own to summarise the different types. The language is not universal and very much varies by region. But, in the box on the right we share the very basics of the vocabulary used for grading black tea, whether its processed using the orthodox route or via CTC.

THE VERY BASICS OF TEA GRADING

Here's how we start to describe black tea.

BROKEN (B, FOR SHORT)
bigger leaf, broken or cut – found in various sizes and used mainly in loose-leaf tea

FANNINGS (F, FOR SHORT)
medium leaf, small particles of tea leaves (1mm in size) used mainly in teabags

DUST (D, FOR SHORT)
small leaf for intense brewing, only used in teabags

Sacks of black tea awaiting onward transport from the Melfort Tea Factory, Nuwara-Eliya region, Sri Lanka.

TEA GEEK SPEAK

If you want to impress someone with your tea knowledge, try something along the lines of 'I only drink "TGFOP"', meaning a tippy, golden, flowery, orange pekoe. The lingo used for CTC tea is a little bit more straightforward than that for orthodox teas. Here are our highlights.

Top of the pile (what are known as primary grades) for CTC teas:

BP1

Broken Pekoe 1

Forms about 12–14% of the total production and has the largest size particles. Liquors are light in colour but have a strong flavour.

PF1

Pekoe Fannings 1

Forms the bulk of the production (about 58–60%); it's made up of black grainy particles slightly smaller than the BP1.

PD

Pekoe Dust

Forms 10–12% of the production; it's often black and finer than the PF1 with thick liquors and aroma.

D1

Dust 1

Forms about 4–6% of the production; it is made up of the smallest particles and characterised by strong liquors.

Bottom of the bunch (what are known as secondary grades):

D

Dust

Made up of tiny bits of broken leaf often used to brew strong tea.

BMF

Broken Mixed Fannings (some call this ‘mattress fibre’ instead as that’s what it looks like!)

Fibrous bits with very little trace of black teas.

LET'S TALK ORTHODOX BLACK TEAS

As with CTC processed teas, tea industry bods use a series of acronyms to describe the quality and character of different black teas that follow orthodox processing; it tends to be Asian or Indian black teas that follow the orthodox route. So, if you're keen to know what's good – broadly speaking, more letters mean more fancy – although some great smaller leaf teas can be found.

GFBOP

Golden Flowery Broken Orange Pekoe[*]

Produced mainly in Assam

[*] Say it 'peck-oh' or 'pee-koh'. This Chinese term means 'white down' and refers to the character of the young leaves. Pekoe and Orange Pekoe are terms for the grade of tea.

GBOP

Golden Broken[*] **Orange Pekoe**

The next, second sorting with few tips

[*] Smaller leaf, broken or cut.

BP AND OP

Broken Pekoe and Orange Pekoe

A brown to black, heavily broken tea from Indonesia, Ceylon and Southern India; often with very woody, stalky particles

GFOP

Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe

The top grade from the only surviving Kenya tea garden that manufactures tippy tea

BOP

Broken Orange Pekoe

A uniform dense leaf that gives a quickly coloured infusion. The main broken grade of Ceylon, South India, Java and China

TGBOP

Tippy Golden Broken Orange Pekoe

The finest broken grade produced in Darjeeling and Assam. Highly tippy

FOP

Flowery Orange Pekoe
Plain grade of Indian leaf tea

FBOP

Flowery Broken orange pekoe
A coarser broken grade with some tips, it comes from Assam, Indonesia, China and Bangladesh

BPS

Broken Pekoe Souchong
Assam and Darjeeling, pearl-shaped leaves

TGFOP

***Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe**
Seen mainly in Darjeeling and Assam

* The lighter, or golden, tips of the tea (leaf tips of the young, tender tea leaf bud) that do not affect the colour in the cup.

TIPPY

Only produced in Indonesia

OP SUP

Orange Pekoe Superior*
Bit Tippy. Produced mainly in Indonesia

* Well, that's normal English, not tea geek-speak.

SFTGFOP1

Special Finest Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe 1
Super duper grade of tea

FTGFOP1

Finest Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe 1
Mainly from Darjeeling, some from Assam. Top grade tea

Who knew?

The word ‘orange’ in Orange Pekoe doesn’t describe the colour of the leaf (that would be strange) but, in fact, refers to the Dutch royal family who were among the first to import tea into Europe.

INDIAN TEA

A tea plucker holds freshly picked tea leaves in her hands.

The three biggest-producing regions of black tea in India are two you've most probably heard of: Darjeeling and Assam and, another that you are less likely to have heard of, Nilgiri Mountains.

DARJEELING

All around the hilltown of Darjeeling are blankets of green and gentle slopes of some 80-odd tea gardens and estates, stretching off into the distance. It's high up, too – over 2000 metres (6800ft) – and the regular mists rise to reveal the most spectacular vistas of the mountains all around; Darjeeling in West Bengal, India, sits at the feet of the Himalayas.

The extreme positioning of the tea bushes, the altitude, the cool weather and the expert production methods all come together to produce what is an amazing range of teas. Darjeeling is home to some of the best teas in the world. We like to think of Darjeeling as the champagne of teas. In fact, its status is recognised now (just like French champagne is the world over) and only teas originating in Darjeeling can take the name Darjeeling.

Teas at Darjeeling range from black and brown leaf with a strong flavour to pale-green leaf with a light, golden taste; whichever you like, we think they're both best drunk without milk. Darjeelings are known for having a muscatel character – if you like this floral dessert wine then find a Darjeeling to match.

The steep slopes of tea bushes at the Tukvar Tea Estate, Darjeeling.

HARVESTS: Darjeeling flush

There are four harvests in Darjeeling giving rise to teas of different characters and tastes. The flush refers to the growth spurt the tea leaves go through before a harvest.

1. FIRST FLUSH (FIRST PICKING SEASON) IN MID-MARCH–END APRIL/MAY.
   The taste/appearance: astringent and sharper tasting. The bushes have been dormant over the winter and the shoots are super tender. They have a green/black appearance.
2. SECOND FLUSH IN MAY–JUNE.
   The taste/appearance: rapid growth gives a stronger, sweeter taste. This harvest is where you will really taste muscatel.
3. MONSOON HARVEST IN JULY–OCTOBER.
   The taste/appearance: the heavy rain means rapid growth but weakens the strength and complexity of the flavours.
4. AUTUMNAL FLUSH IN OCTOBER–NOVEMBER.
   The taste/appearance: less rain and cooler weather slows the production and the first flush characteristics appear.

Meet the tea maker

Louise meets… Sanjay Bansal, who was born into tea and is now chairman of the Ambootia group, which owns the Happy Valley Tea Estate. Nestled amid the wispy clouds straddling the eastern slopes of the majestic Himalayas lies a valley – Happy Valley – and the only tea garden in Darjeeling town.

Where in the world? Darjeeling, West Bengal, India

At what altitude does it sit? 2070m (6800ft)

How much tea does it produce? 40 tonnes

How many workers? 276

What types of tea are produced? Orthodox black, green, white and speciality teas

Describe your estate?

Happy Valley is located in Darjeeling town and, therefore, has easy access to all facilities. It is about 3 hours' drive from the airport and the railway station.

From Happy Valley estate you get a panoramic view of Darjeeling from its altitude of over 2000m (6800ft), occupying a sprawling 177 hectares (438 acres) of dense underbrush and forest cover. The unique geographical combination of altitude, soil and climate makes the tea here have a distinct flavour. With the glorious Kanchenjunga bearing down upon it, its vantage point allows a mesmerising view of the quaint little township of Darjeeling.

This tea estate has quite a history. David Wilson, an Englishman, established the tea estate in 1854 as Wilson Tea Estate. By early 1860, the garden had started production. In 1903, an Indian Sahib by the name of Tarapada Banerjee took over the estate and later, in 1929, merged it with another nearby estate he bought; thus was formed Happy Valley Tea Estate. Regrettably however, the garden fell into bad times and the owners abandoned it. Sadly, Happy Valley Tea Estate was declared sick and abandoned around 2000.

Notwithstanding the salubrious climatic conditions, Happy Valley remained predominantly unproductive for many years. It was subject to identical impediments that plague tea gardens all over the country – poor management and labour disputes that teetered on the brink of violence.

In March 2007, the management was taken over by us. Subsequently we implemented good agriculture and manufacturing practices. We follow an organic and biodynamic system of agriculture as well as following international standards for quality and food safety.

happy valley

A view from on high, looking down the valley.

What got you into tea?

I was born on the nearby Ambootia Tea Estate. I am a third-generation tea worker; tea runs through my blood.

What is great about the tea grown on Happy Valley Tea Estate and why?

To me every aspect of tea is great. Darjeeling tea forms a very important part of India's cultural and collective intellectual heritage. It is of considerable importance to the economy of India because of its international reputation.

Darjeeling tea cannot be grown or manufactured anywhere else in the world. The quality, reputation and characteristics of Darjeeling tea are essentially attributable to its geographical origin. It is one of India's treasured 'geographical indication' products. Only tea grown and produced in the defined area of the Darjeeling district in the state of West Bengal, India can be called Darjeeling tea.

On 9th November 2011, Darjeeling tea became the first Indian product to be protected as a geographical indication in the EU. Darjeeling tea is now legally recognised and protected in India and in the EU. This registration of Darjeeling tea is the ultimate protection of the rights of the discerning consumers, which will in turn ensure the availability of authentic Darjeeling tea.

Darjeeling tea has a unique flavour that cannot be replicated anywhere else. It is referred to as 'The Queen of Teas' and its golden brew is light and bright in colour.

How have you seen the tea industry change? How have the requirements changed for tea growers?

The tea industry focus has been to improve the quality of tea. We've listened to consumers and they are more aware of quality as an issue. We feel that good-quality teas receive a premium, whereas no consumer wants poor-quality tea.

What manufacturing processes do you use at your estate?

At Happy Valley we produce orthodox black, green, white and speciality teas.

The withering room at Happy Valley.

Can you describe a typical day on the estate?

The work at the tea estate starts early; on my visits I arrive at 6am and I walk around the factory for 30 minutes to get an idea of how the previous day's harvest is getting on. After the factory visit, I walk off into the fields. I'll find just the right spot and eat my breakfast in the outdoors and will wander around the fields until lunchtime, about 1pm. After lunch I return to the factory to taste the teas that have been processed that morning – this is our quality control. Next, I'll visit the factory's withering area to assess the quality of the green leaf there. Some time after 5pm I'll sit down with the management of the estate to discuss the current workload and also what's coming up.

How often do you leave the tea estate?

I am stationed at the tea company's head office in Kolkata, but visit the plantation every two months to provide my inputs into the field work and manufacturing to fine tune the processes for a superlative quality. The tea estate is managed by a team comprising of a manager, assistant managers, staff and supervisors.

What's your favourite cuppa? Do you only drink your own tea?

Tea made in every season becomes my favourite – as each season produces teas with different characters and flavours. Yes, I am addicted to the tea we produce – as I think we produce the best tea.

How do you drink tea? Do you only drink freshly brewed tea?

I drink tea throughout the day and when not travelling I brew loose-leaf tea that is fresh from the season. However, I do keep a stock of my favourites to be savoured in the cold months when there is no harvest.

What do you love about tea?

I love the passion behind all aspects of growing and producing tea.

The tea harvest; soon to become Darjeeling tea.

ASSAM

In stark contrast to the high-altitude mountainside tea estates in Darjeeling, the beautiful region of Assam in northeastern India (near Bangladesh and Myanmar) is close to sea level, with a warm climate and heavy rainfall. In India both cultivars of tea grow but each thrives in different locations. Over time, growers have discovered that *Camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis* cultivars grow best at high altitudes while *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica* bushes flourish in the plains, or at a slightly lower altitude of 300m (1000ft). And, lest we forget to say, Assam is also home to five national parks and the one-horned rhino!

Here, tea is grown predominantly in the valley either side of the Brahmaputra river. Assam has about 800 tea estates and is the largest tea-producing region in the world. The low altitude, heavy rainfall and rich soil all contribute to excellent cropping conditions. The varietal grown here is *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica* (see also What exactly is tea?). This larger, tougher-leaf varietal is used to produce both CTC and orthodox teas (see Rolling). Both the CTC and the orthodox teas from Assam are drunk in India and sold all over the world.

The finest orthodox Assam teas are incredibly popular; they give malty complex flavours. The character of a CTC Assam tea is strong and bold and also malty. What we call the 'thickness in the mouth' (see also How does it taste?) of CTC Assam teas, in particular, is an integral part of the great British cuppa'. Brits (whether we know it or not) love the strong, malty, thick character that Assam teas give. At teapigs, we use it in our Everyday Brew to compliment the flavour and briskness given by the other teas in that blend.

Bundles of freshly plucked leaves being carried by the tea pluckers.

Nilgiri Mountains

The Nilgiri Mountains, or Blue Mountains, lie at the southwestern tip of India and 24,280 hectares (60,000 acres) of this area are dedicated to tea production; it's the third biggest tea-growing region in India. In tea terms the Nilgiri region is lucky (some would say unlucky) as it has two rainy seasons. All this rain means the tea grows year round, so the harvest can be year round too.

The quality of Nilgiri tea ranges from some of the finest examples of high-altitude, small production teas that have a delicate flavour to much more regular-quality base teas that's used for blending.

Who knew?

Before the 1950s the people of India hardly drank tea, but now they drink almost 80% of the tea grown in India, mostly Assam and Darjeeling!

Meet the tea maker

Louise meets… Mr Hegde of Korakundah Tea. Korakundah is the highest tea-growing area in India, possibly the world. And with its sister tea estate (Chamraj), it is the largest manufacturer-exporter estate group in the Nilgiri Mountains.

Where in the world? Nilgiri Mountains, Tamil Nadu, Southern India

At what altitude does it sit? About 2285–2440m (7500–8000ft) above sea level

How much tea does it produce? 600 tonnes per year

How many workers? 350

What types of tea are produced? Organic green, oolong and chamomile teas

Describe your estate?

Korakundah Organic is part of the United Nilgiri Tea Estates Company Limited and has its 93-year-old plantations situated in the Blue Mountains of the Nilgiris. It sits between two tiger reserves. The South Indian hills and weather pattern gives Korakundah tea it's special exotic flavour. Korakundah also is the highest tea growing area in India, possibly the world.

What got you into tea?

I've been working at the estate for 39 years and still enjoy everything about the estate and tea.

How have you seen the tea industry change? How have the requirements changed for tea growers?

The machinery has changed over the years to comply with the FSSAI regulations and also the consumption of tea has changed because of younger generations choosing tea over other beverages. Organic tea is in great demand in the international market.

What manufacturing processes do you use at your estate?

At Korakundah, we are organic and follow the orthodox method of processing for our green and black teas.

Can you describe a typical day on the estate?

A day on the estate usually starts with tasting the previous day's manufacture and visiting the bushes and looking into day-to-day activities.

What's your favourite cuppa?

Frost tea, I love its muscatel taste.

How do you drink tea? Do you only drink freshly brewed tea?

I brew tea in a pot, mostly green tea, and always go for quality.

What do you love about tea?

Seeing a plant growing in a unique location being sent all over the world to be enjoyed by many.

SRI LANKA

Not long ago, this island in the Indian Ocean (officially known as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka) didn't have any tea bushes on it whatsoever; instead, it was covered in coffee plantations. But from the late 19th century (for several reasons), Sri Lanka made the switch from coffee to tea, and its tea production has never looked back; Sri Lanka is the one of the big five tea producers in the world (see Top 20 tea producers). The teas grown here are known as Ceylon teas, as Ceylon was how Sri Lanka was formerly known and that's a term that's stuck in the tea trade to the present day.

SRI LANKAN TEA GROWING – LOW TO HIGH

Its tropical climate means that several tea harvests are possible every year and the tea gardens or estates span all parts and levels of the island. Very broadly speaking, you can categorise the black teas of Sri Lanka by altitude.

As you'd expect, the flavour and character of the teas grown at different levels are also different.

High-grown teas (from 1200 to 2000m/ 3940–6560ft)

High-grown teas are prized for their super-delicate citrus notes.

Mid-grown teas (from 600 to 1200m/ 1970–3940ft)

Mid-grown teas are full bodied with a medium flavour.

Low-grown teas (up to 600m/ 1970ft)

Low-grown teas produce a strong character with a very wiry black leaf.

AFRICAN TEA

Although some tea producers in Africa have been growing tea for over a century, the tea industry generally views them as relative newbies in the production of black tea. Most tea growers in African countries use the *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica* cultivar as it best suits their subtropical climates. Huge corporations tend to dominate and own acres and acres of tea estates and operate on a volume basis. In terms of growing tea, the key African producers are all in the east of Africa, as the climate of the great lakes region suits the growing of tea: Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Mozambique who use predominantly the CTC tea production route. As well as black tea, rooibos is also grown in South Africa; though that's not a true tea, strictly speaking.

KENYA AND TANZANIA

Their equatorial climates allow tea growing – and hence harvesting – all year round.

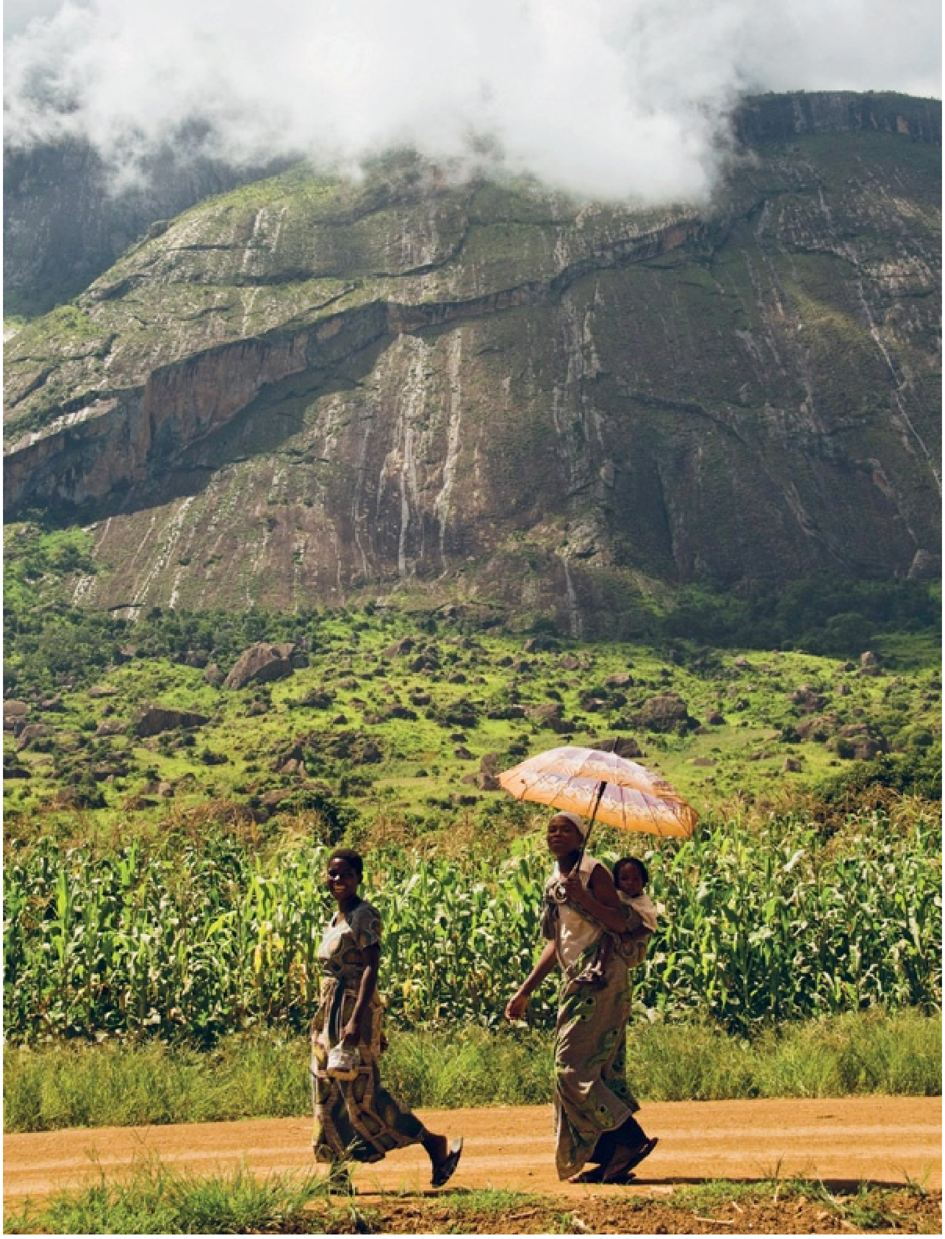
The tea-growing region sits west of Nairobi, predominantly around Kericho but stretching up towards the Rift Valley. This area of high, rolling and lush hills are where most tea gardens are situated (between 1500 and 2000m/5000–6500ft) and sits in contrast to the dry north of the country. Kenyan tea growers are broadly either small farmers who work under an umbrella organisation called the Kenyan Tea Development Agency (who sells the tea on their behalf) or large-scale producers owning a number of estates. Kenya is one of the top five tea-growing nations in the world – tea is harvested year round – and exports over 90% of its production.

Kenya produces bright yellow brisk teas as well as rich, red, coppery teas.

MALAWI

We think Malawi has to be one of the most beautiful tea-growing countries in the world. The tea-growing region is sparsely populated and sits at the base of Mount Mulanje. Mostly, tea is grown and processed by independent producers who also own factories. Tea harvests happen from October to April – that's their summertime.

Malawian teas tend to be thin and very red (think, tomato soup!). Much of the harvests are exported for use in tea blends for large European companies.



Tea workers walking through the Mount Mulanje area, Malawi.

RWANDA AND BURUNDI

Rwandan tea is planted at high altitudes (1900–2500m/6235–8200ft) and on well-drained marshes (1550–1800m/5085–5905ft). Tea is grown on 11 estates.

Teas grown on the mountainsides of Rwanda and Burundi are bright and brisk; they are not widely available as single-estate teas but they are well worth seeking out.

In Burundi, tea is the second-largest cash crop after coffee and 80% of tea comes from village plantations. Here, tea is harvested throughout the year and provides about 60,000 households with a regular source of income.

Meet the tea maker

Louise meets… Amar Pal Singh Shaw from the Pfunda Tea Estate – one of the leading tea estates in Rwanda, Africa. Pfunda lies below the Nyiragongo volcano, one of the volcanoes forming the Virunga Massif, which is home to mountain gorillas, and above Lake Kivu, in an area known as the Congo – Nile Crest, in the Western Province of Rwanda.

Where in the world? Western Rwanda, Africa

At what altitude does it sit? From 1700–2200m (5577–7218ft) above sea level

How much tea does it produce? 2350 tonnes per year

How many workers? A total of 2342, fairly evenly split between men and women

What types of tea are produced? Single estate black tea

Describe your estate?

Pfunda Tea Estate lies a three-hour journey from Kigali: the road meanders along valleys, up hillsides, atop ridges and climbs over crests, bringing into view numerous hill ranges, the hillsides covered with ‘patchwork quilt’ fields; every inch of land is farmed.

What got you into tea?

I grew up among the tea bushes of the Darjeeling district in Northern India, my family had a tea-processing equipment manufacturing and maintenance business there. Tea was a way of life and not an occupation or a job. Me and my wife and children and now grandchildren enjoy the outdoors and free open country, we feel very claustrophobic in a city or urban environment. I’ve now worked at Pfunda for over 10 years.

How have you seen the tea industry change? How have the requirements changed for tea growers?

In my opinion, there has been no serious change in the tea industry.

What manufacturing processes do you use at your estate?

Pfunda produces quality CTC tea. The process is very simple but needs close monitoring; we ensure that withering takes between 12 and 16 hours; the leaves are cut by rotorvane and CTC; and we ferment/oxidise for 80–90 minutes depending on the ambient temperature.

Can you describe a typical day on the estate?

At 5am, the factory starts manufacturing. I arrive about 7am and go to the office to check the previous day's record books. About 8 o'clock, I taste some tea and take a tour of the factory, discuss factory works with the relevant department heads – tea making, maintenance and progress on factory expansion projects. At 9am, I go home for breakfast but by 9.30am I'll be out in the tea fields. About 1.30pm, I go back home for some lunch and return again to the office about 3pm. At 4.30pm, I close the shop and go home.

What's your favourite cuppa?

Pfunda tea, factory fresh.

How do you drink tea? Do you only drink freshly brewed tea?

Originally hailing from a farming community of Jat Sikhs from the Punjab, I like my tea to be thick, boiled in water with milk and some cardamom and ginger for added flavour. I am aware that this method of brewing tea is not appreciated by the more discerning tea connoisseur, but I love it.

What do you love about tea?

Tea is my life, I know no other.

HERBAL TEAS

The rule is a simple one: if it's tea, it must come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. So, what of peppermint tea or chamomile tea? Well, strictly speaking, they're not tea at all, but infusions or, for the truly pedantic, tisanes.

ROOIBOS TEA

The bushmen of Africa have been drinking rooibos (we say 'roy-boss') for hundreds of years and they seem to live long and happy lives. The name 'rooibos' means red bush, as it's also known, but the red colour of this tea comes only from the fermentation process – the rooibos bush is actually green, just like the tea bush.

This soothing drink is sweet and nutty in taste, is naturally caffeine-free and is low in tannins. The tea is made from the leaves of the rooibos plant, which grows in just one place – the Cederberg region, deep in the heart of South Africa.

Making rooibos your cuppa of choice is thought to ease headaches, nervous tension and insomnia. Rooibos also contains phenylpyretic acid, which is thought to help skin conditions such as eczema. And it's packed with micronutrients, including copper, iron, potassium, calcium, fluoride, zinc, manganese and alpha-hydroxy acids (yes, the ones in beauty products).

LIQUORICE

The roots of the small liquorice plant, also known as sweet root, can extend to 9 metres (30ft) long and it grows throughout Europe and Asia. It is this root that is used to make tea.

CHAMOMILE

Chamomile is one of the old favourites among garden herbs and its reputation as a medicinal plant that makes you snooze is well known. The fresh plant has a lovely scent, with a distinct 'appley' smell - not lost on the Greeks, who named it 'ground-apple' (Kamal-melon). There are many reputed benefits of drinking chamomile. It is believed to strengthen the immune system, aid digestion, calm nerves and ease stomach pains.

HONEYBUSH

Like rooibos or red bush, honeybush is another South African wonder bush and, unsurprisingly, is slightly sweeter in taste than rooibos. The name comes from its scented yellow flowers with their distinctly honey scent. According to tradition, the best tea is harvested during its flowering period. Honeybush tea is packed with vitamin C, potassium, calcium and magnesium. It has a very low tannin content and contains no caffeine whatsoever.

YERBA MATE

Yerba mate is a small evergreen tree or shrub of the holly family, native to the subtropical highlands of northern Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and southern Brazil. It is actually pronounced 'yerba mat-hey' but we don't mind if you call it mate – old buddy, old chum.

The word yerba is a corruption of hierba, the Spanish for herb, and mate is from a Quechua Indian word mati meaning cup. So, you put them together and yerba mate literally means a 'cup of herbs'.

The Guarani Indians were the first to cure all ills by drinking yerba mate; it is thought to boost immunity, cleanse and detoxify the blood, combat fatigue, control the appetite, reduce stress and eliminate insomnia.

Although it can be drunk as an infusion (a teabag in a cup, aka a cocido), mate is traditionally drunk from a gourd (unhelpfully, also called a mate) via a straw called a bombilla.

LEMONGRASS

Lemongrass is not just for making fragrant curries – it makes an awesome tea. You might well have bought the odd one or two for cooking, but this perennial tufted grass, with its long, sharp-edged blades, grows in dense clumps in tropical or subtropical climates. The plants last three to four years and are harvested every three to five months. Lemongrass is grown throughout South East Asia, Southern India, Sri Lanka, Central Africa, Brazil, Guatemala, the US and the West Indies.

Its herbal properties are centuries old and are commonly used in Indonesia and Malaysia by herbalists. It seems that lemongrass is a tonic to combat depression and bad moods and to fight fever.

PEPPERMINT

We all know a mug of peppermint tea helps digestion. The ancient Egyptians, one of the most medically advanced ancient cultures, cultivated and used peppermint leaves for indigestion. The ancient Romans and Greeks also took peppermint to soothe dodgy stomachs. The active ingredient in peppermint is menthol, which is an organic compound that produces a cooling sensation when applied to the mouth or skin. Alternative therapies include gargling with peppermint tea three times a day to help soothe a sore throat.

The chemistry of tea

We all know tea as a delicious drink in a cup or in its raw state as a lovely shiny, green leaf. That's really all we need to know, but if you did ever stop to wonder what's actually inside that leaf or what might be in your cup as a result, then the following guide to the 'chemistry of tea' may provide a few welcome answers.

Of course, as with any science, when we delve deeper nothing is quite black or white (with the exception of black holes, of course). Tea chemistry is no different. A raw tea leaf may contain many thousands of chemical compounds, which can differ as to where in the world the tea is grown, its altitude, the climate or maybe the time of year it's harvested or even from

where on the bush (top tip or leaf from further down the stem) it's plucked. Those chemicals may then be altered again as that leaf first becomes processed and then again when that processed leaf is infused in hot or boiling water.

An expert tea taster, like Louise, will tell you that it is the art of a tea master who will determine the quality and taste of a tea, as they know exactly when to pluck the leaf, how long to wither and ferment, roll or crush, pack and store and, ultimately, make the tea for optimum pleasure. However, a scientist might be able to explain what's going on during all these stages by referring to the changes in chemical composition of the leaf and the ultimate result on flavour. They are probably both right, but until someone invents a machine that will replace the art and knowledge of a tea master (please don't), we'll go with Louise.

But for wannabe science buffs, here's a guide to what's in a tea leaf:

POLYPHENOLS

It's these natural compounds that give tea its astringency. In green tea the polyphenols are best known as catechins, the 'big daddy' of them being epigallocatechin gallate (or EGCG to those, like us, who can't pronounce the full name). It's on these little beauties that much scientific research regarding the antioxidant properties of tea are focussed.

AMINO ACIDS

The prevalent amino acid in tea is l-theanine, and tea is one of the few plants that contains this little wonder. Most of the amino acids in tea are changed to polyphenols by the action of the sun. The more sun, the lower the amino acid content, and vice versa. Thus, shade-grown tea used for Matcha has higher concentrations of amino acids than regular tea. Much research is being conducted into whether l-theanine promotes alpha brain wave activity and, with caffeine, induces a state of 'mindful alertness' when drinking tea. Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't, but that's how we feel when drinking tea, so who are we to argue?

ALKALOIDS

These usually bitter-tasting compounds occur naturally in plants, with the best known in tea being the infamous caffeine. Some people crave it for its stimulant properties, others avoid it for the same reason. As with many things in life, everything in moderation is probably the best advice.

ENZYMES

Basically enzymes make tea leaves go brown during the fermentation (oxidisation) process. If they are prevented from doing their oxidation work, then the leaf stays green. Black tea, green tea; it's the enzymes that make all the difference. We have enzymes in our bodies: they help us digest our food and drinks – they're chemical catalysts for lots of reactions.

PIGMENTS

The world would be a monochromatic place without pigments, because plants wouldn't have any colour. These naturally occurring compounds, such as chlorophyll (which gives plants their green colour) and beta-carotene (which makes carrots orange) determine what colour a plant will be. If a green leaf is allowed to oxidise (during fermentation) the chlorophyll will morph into black pigments known as pheophytins. Other pigments found in tea are carotenes, which are orange and xanthophylls, which are yellow.

CARBOHYDRATES

Including sugars and starches, carbohydrates are the energy stores of plants. When we eat the plants, we break them down to give us energy. In tea, carbohydrates fuel the enzymatic reactions during oxidation.

MINERALS

There are up to 28 minerals found in tea, the most common being fluorine, which has been known to prevent tooth decay. Our bodies need small amounts of many minerals to work properly.

VOLATILES

Without these compounds, food wouldn't have a smell or a taste. They are light and evaporate readily from foods, so are lost over time unless protected. Tea may contain thousands of flavour and aroma compounds, many of which occur during its processing, and will ultimately determine the exact flavour of the tea.

Who knew?

Tea does not contain tannin acid! Tannins is an old-fashioned term for the polyphenols in black tea. The name was coined because it was noted that tea could stain objects a brown colour in a manner similar to the way tannic acid tans leather. Nowadays it is often used to describe the mouth-drying effect (astringency) of tea and wine etc. However, we prefer to call the compounds responsible for this effect by their correct name: polyphenols!

DRINKING TEA

Mao Feng green tea.

The job of a tea taster

Men tasting tea in an English tea-trading house, circa 1932. The tasters stand on one side and their colleagues take down the tasting notes.

Fully trained tea tasters are few and far between, so we are super-proud to be able to say that teapigs teas have been tasted and selected by an expert with over 15 years' experience. Louise has tasted thousands and thousands of cups of teas over the years. After starting her training at Tetley tea, which involved slurping and spitting at a rate of over 200 to 500 cups per day, she then took off around the world visiting tea estates and buying tea direct from estates or at auctions.

GET TO KNOW THE INDUSTRY

As long as you are not colour blind you can develop the skills to become a tea taster. Developing the palate is a bit of an endurance test, tasting hundreds and hundreds of cups of different kinds of teas over and over again. But it's not all slurping and spitting for a tea taster, you're also responsible for buying tea – via auctions, via brokers or direct from tea estates. Travelling to tea estates is an essential element of the role – understanding the season and the current production while also building relationships is a key part of the job. This can mean travelling to some of the most extreme, remote and beautiful locations around the world – I know it sounds tough, but someone's got to do it!

Various tea samples spread out on a table during a tasting session.

EDUCATING YOUR TASTE BUDS

While you can perfect slurping from a spoon in a few weeks, distinguishing flavours and identifying mouthfeel takes a good while longer. As you slurp and swill the tea around your mouth, the layers of taste appear. Head notes are the tastes that are identified immediately; these first impressions of flavour allow you to immediately categorise the tea as good, bad or great.

The further assessment in the mouth helps to decide whether the tea really makes the grade.

> **“Wouldn’t it be dreadful to live in a country where they didn’t have tea?”**
>
> Noël Coward, *English playwright, director, actor and singer*

ACCESSORIES FOR THE JOB

There can't be many jobs where the requirements are a big spoon, plenty of North-facing light and a bucket on wheels. But to be a professional tea taster all these things are essential. The big, flat, soup-style spoon is to get a good slurp. The slurp is needed to lift the tea from the spoon into the mouth along with plenty of oxygen, to get the flavour up into the nostrils for a thorough taste assessment. Lots of North-facing light is ideal for looking at the colour and reflection on the meniscus of the tea. The bucket on wheels – called a spittoon – is for spitting out the tea after tasting. No one should literally drink hundreds of cups of tea a day.

Once you have the kit and look the part in an apron (it can get messy), it's time to get started. Large batches of tea are tasted in one go, if you have the space and the help. A tea buyer or tea taster will prepare themselves for an upcoming auction by tasting the auction catalogue. Then, they'll be able to narrow down which teas they'll buy (or bid on) at auction.

HOW DOES IT TASTE?

You've already heard that slurping is positively encouraged and that there's a special spoon for the job. You might think that anyone can slurp, well they can to a point, but perfecting the action of slurping tea does take some time and practice. Dribbling down the chin in the first few weeks of tea tasting is totally normal and expected, hence the need for the apron!

Using a large soup-style spoon means that you can take in a deep breath at the same time as sucking the liquid into your mouth. A large, loud slurp brings oxygen into your mouth, helping the flavour to circulate. Up to 90% of taste is picked up using your sense of smell. Our tongues, on the other hand, are excellent at detecting the five essential tastes and these give us our initial impression of tea: sweet, salty, acidic, bitter and umami (a word from Japanese, meaning 'a pleasant savoury taste').

As well as the taste of the tea, you'll identify the way in which the tea feels in the mouth (known, unsurprisingly, as mouthfeel). What is the weight of the tea? Is it closer to custard rather than water? Does it have an oily character? Is it very drying or astringent? All such elements are all important when it comes to blending teas (see below).

Tasting the auction catalogue in India. Each tea has a number to be examined easily.

BLENDING TEA

Many teas are drunk as a blend of more than one type; there are **single-estate teas** but they are in the minority. Professional tea tasters have their own **language** to grade and identify teas (see Tea geek speak), which allows us to know which standard the teas are and how they can be used in blending.

Tea is incredibly **sensitive** and will easily pick up nearby smells – a bonfire, for example, or, one of my favourites, Brazilian tea with a **hint of coconut.** Some characteristics are not noticeable once the tea is blended, but there is no hiding a burnt tea!

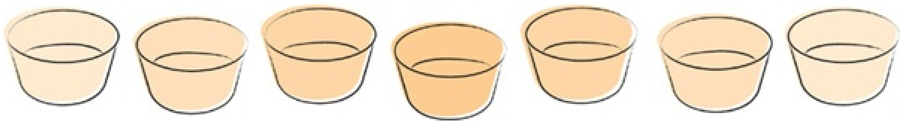
Once you have travelled to the estate, learnt to slurp and purchased the tea, the job of a tea taster can then be down to **blending** the tea. The art of blending is all about **developing consistency.** A loyal tea customer who regularly buys a certain brand of tea will be looking for it to **taste the same every time.** But because every batch of tea produced tastes ever so slightly different, a tea taster's work is cut out to adjust the blend so that it always tastes the same. The **grading** helps to simplify the process. When the tea arrives at the point of packing it will be graded again. The final blend will be made up (by hand blend) before actual production to check the blend recipe is 'on standard' before committing to packing.

THE NITTY GRITTY: Assessing the look of the tea

First up comes a visual assessment – of both the tea leaves themselves and their brew or liquor. The dry leaf – how does this look? Large or small? Cut or twisted? Stalk, bud or tip? This leaf assessment gives us an indication of what we are about to taste – almost a sneak preview.

When it comes to assessing the liquor – we look for three aspects: colour, brightness and clarity.

1. **Colour – this varies hugely depending on the manufacturing style and the quality of the tea. Even within the same region, there can be a wide variation in colour – African teas range from dark, rich, red teas to bright, light and yellow teas, for instance.**
2. **Brightness – this is literally the light reflection from the top of the cup. Us Brits generally like an amber colour brew with a bright appearance.**
3. **Clarity – how clear is the brew? If we are looking at green, white or oolong tea (that is any tea you would drink without milk), clarity is important too – who'd want to drink a cloudy, murky-looking cup of tea? Not me.**



Tasting tea like a pro

A professional tea taster may take anything from five years upwards to develop a palate for tasting tea and a vocabulary to be able to describe it, so that they are able to blend teas to make the tastiest cuppa. Here, our expert Louise gives you tips on tasting tea.

When tasting teas, as well as making the right strength of brew and going through the right motions to extract all the flavours and characters of a tea (see below), we also make sure we taste the teas in the correct order. For example, it is no good tasting peppermint leaves first as the flavour is so strong that it will kill your palate for the rest of the session. Generally, taste pure tea from the tea bush (green tea, white tea, black tea and oolong tea) first and then move on to the herbals.

IT'S A CASE OF SCRUTINISE, SNIFF, SLURP AND SPIT!

SCRUTINISE: HOW DOES IT LOOK?

Like me, you'll be looking for two things with regard to the appearance of the tea: colour and brightness. Use white porcelain vessels (cups and bowls) so that the colour sings loud. And when you're looking at brightness, look at the reflection from the top of the meniscus, or the ring at the edge of the cup or bowl.

SNIFF: HOW DOES IT SMELL?

Since smell is intricately intertwined with taste, it's really important to inhale the aromas of the tea. Do this immediately before you slurp.

SLURP: HOW DOES IT TASTE AND FEEL?

As we mentioned before, flavour is actually a combination of smell and taste. So, inhaling and slurping means that you'll get the flavours up into your nose and then the tea will run all around your thousands of taste buds. Will you find a tea that uses any one of my top 5 favourite tea descriptions?

Once you've slurped the tea, think about the tea's mouthfeel. When describing how it feels in your mouth, you might want to use words such as 'tingly', 'drying', 'oily' or 'creamy'.

HOW TO SLURP

Use a large, flat soup-style spoon, like I do, to take a spoonful of tea to your mouth. As the loaded spoon arrives, inhale, purse your lips and take a huge loud slurp. (The louder the slurp the better, as it brings in lots of oxygen, so that the flavours taste livelier.)

SPIT – DON'T SWALLOW

To experience the full flavour of the tea, you'll need to spit it out (rather than swallowing it straightaway, which would mean that lots of the flavour would be lost). Tea tasters use spittoons and trainee tasters have to clean out these rancid buckets on wheels! And we were all trainees once!

THE TEA TASTER'S BREW

When tasting tea, follow all the same rules regarding water, temperature and brew time (see Our unbreakable rules for making a cup of tea), but with the exception of doubling the quantity of tea. By making tea super-strong, I can make sure that my 'super-palate' can detect all the flavours and the quality of each cup or bowl of tea tasted; so give that a try as well when you're tasting.

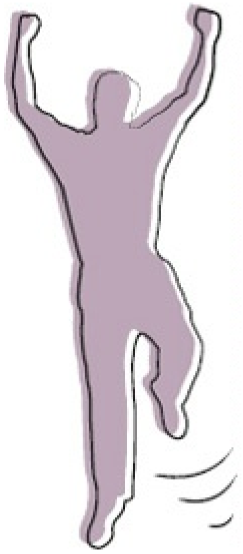
I traditionally taste tea using white pots and bowls, which give the loose leaves lots of space to infuse fully and the water added is measured exactly. I have to say that there is a bit of an art to pouring the tea from the pot into the bowl without spilling the contents all over the table. I think after my 15 years of tea tasting, I've just about mastered that!

MY TOP 5 TEA TASTING TERMS

Every tea taster has a huge vocabulary to be able to express and describe all the flavours of a tea. These are my top 5 favourite expressions, though it has to be said not necessarily my favourite tastes. Goaty tea, anyone?

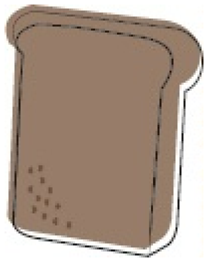
01

BRISK IT'S LIKE A FAST WALK ALL OVER YOUR TONGUE.



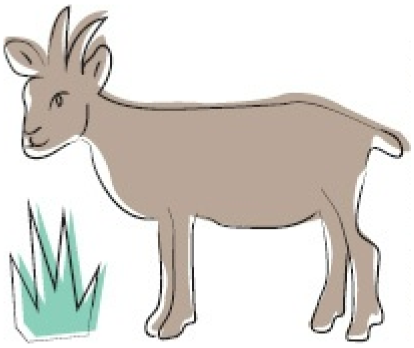
02

TOASTY A LITTLE OVERCOOKED, LIKE DARK BROWN TOAST!



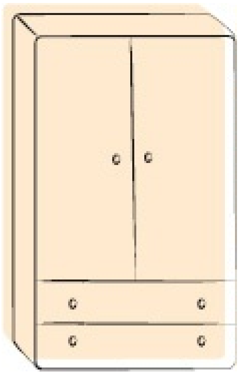
03

GOATY WELL, UM, TASTES OF GOAT.



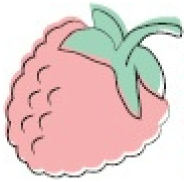
04

FUSTY THINK OF THE SMELL OF A DUSTY OLD WARDROBE, AND THAT'S IT!



05

RJ TASTES OF RASPBERRY JAM. DELICIOUS!



The perfect vessel

Left: A mug of tea; right: A glass of hot tea on a saucer.

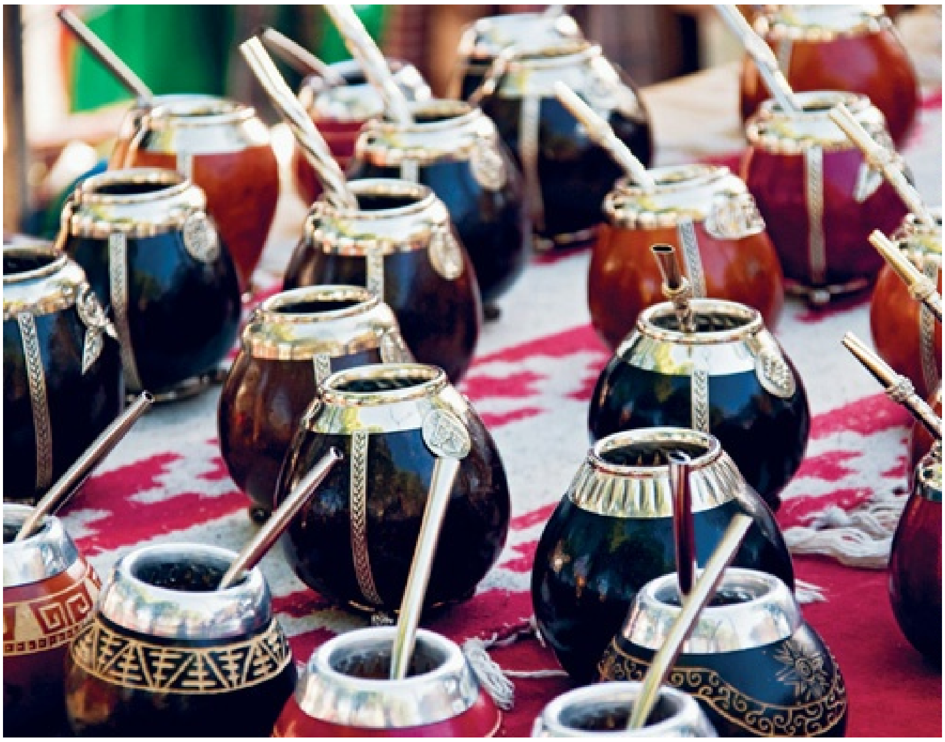
As we've seen throughout the book, tea is far from a 'one size fits all' product. There are so many types of tea and it's drunk across the world in so many different ways and for numerous occasions. Not surprisingly, then, there happens to be a diverse array of vessels for preparation and drinking. One common thing, though, seems to be that just as we each have our favourite way of making tea, we also have a favourite cup, mug or glass to drink it from.

Cup being filled from a samovar.

A glass of mint tea.

Bone china teacups.

A silver Turkish teapot.



Gourds with *bombilla* from Argentina for drinking mate.

Clay cup for chai, India.

OUR UNBREAKABLE ROLES FOR MAKING A CUP OF TEA

Now, we want everyone to drink real tea and enjoy drinking real tea. So, here are our basic seven rules for making the perfect cup of tea, every time. Now, repeat after me… I must only use freshly drawn water, boil it to the right temperature, use top-notch tea with just the right amount of water, brew for 3 minutes and add milk, as desired. Most importantly, enjoy drinking your tea!

RULE 1

ONLY EVER USE FRESHLY DRAWN WATER

It might be a while since you've drawn any water from a well, if ever, but when we say 'freshly drawn water' what we mean is water straight from the tap. Leaving water in the kettle and boiling it over and over again will make the tea taste 'flat'. Why fresh each time? Well, then you get a good shot of oxygen in the water and that makes the tea taste oh-so good.

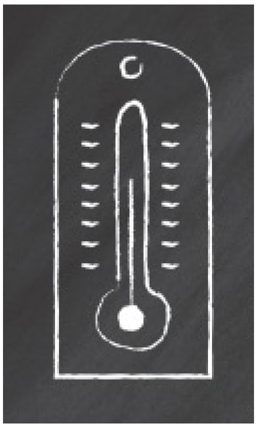
RULE 2

HEAT THE WATER TO THE CORRECT TEMPERATURE

Too hot? Too cold? Aah, just right! If Goldilocks liked tasting tea, she'd surely have something to say about the temperature of the water you use to brew tea. And we do too, and it depends on what tea you're drinking.

Black tea and herbal infusions need boiling water and that means 100°C (212°F).

Green tea, white tea and oolong don't like boiling water as it will scorch the leaves and take away from their delicate flavour. Technically, you are supposed to use water at 80°C (176°F), but seeing as few of us have a thermometer to hand when making a cuppa just click your kettle off before it boils or let it cool a little once it has boiled.



RULE 3

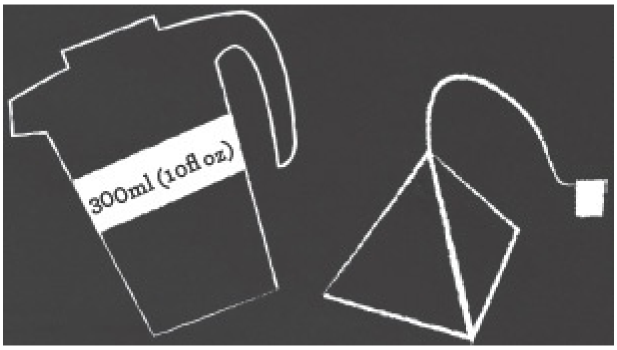
ONLY EVER USE QUALITY TEA

This is a biggie (particularly for us). A nice cuppa comes from brewing nice tea leaves. Don't scrimp when it comes to the quality of the tea. Your taste buds will thank you for it.

RULE 4

USE JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF WATER

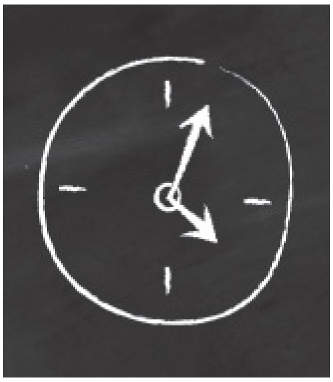
In technical terms, this is the 'tea to water ratio' – it's easy to go wrong on this one. Obviously, a gallon of water and one tea leaf won't make a great brew. So, use one whole leaf mesh bag (or teabag or 1 teaspoon of loose-leaf tea) per person and add enough water for an average sized mug (that's 300ml/10fl oz).



RULE 5

BREW FOR 3 MINUTES

Quality tea has big leaves (rather than dusty sweepings off the floor!) and so they need a good brew time. Don't dunk and run. It takes time – 3 minutes, on average – for the tea leaves to infuse and release their flavour into the water.



RULE 6

WARM THE POT

This really does make a difference if you are making black tea. There is simply no point in putting boiling water into a freezing-cold teapot, it just lowers the temperature of the water straightaway – think of it like putting hot food on a cold plate – plus, the taste won't be half as good. Whether or not you want to go and keep your teapot all cosy with a knitted cover is another thing; though, there's no harm in that.

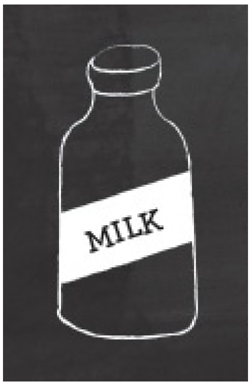
RULE 7

ENJOY THE YUMMY TEA

Allow the brew to cool – once the tea has been separated from the water it is good to let it cool a little. Not only will piping hot water burn your mouth, but it will also stop you from tasting the yummy tea flavours you have just been brewing.

MILK IN FIRST, SECOND OR NEVER?

1. Black tea and rooibos taste good with milk.
2. Herbals, green tea, white tea and oolong are best enjoyed without the white stuff.
3. If you are brewing in a pot and are pouring into a cup – put the milk in first then add the brewed tea.
4. If you are brewing in a mug – pour the milk in second after the tea leaves or teabag has been removed.



WHOLE LEAF, BIG LEAF VS DUSTY TEABAGS AND SWEEPINGS

One simple way to get a better cuppa is to go big. I'm not talking mug size here (though I do like a large mug myself) but leaf size. Here I sum up the simple differences between what I call big tea and small tea. As you'll soon discover, ditching the paper teabag is definitely the way forward.

BIG LEAF

- Looks pretty! Beautiful large orthodox leaf tea and infusions look fabulous.
- Tastes amazing! Quality whole leaf teas have complex flavours – delicate or strong, subtle or powerful.
- Tastes amazing! Ok again, but small batches, packed loose or into those delicate-looking pyramidal mesh bags mean a super-fresh and pure-tasting flavour profile.
- Huge variety. Big-leaf, quality artisan teas tend to be seasonal and from a small production batch and offer lots of variety!
- Economical. The same leaves can be steeped multiple times for several cups of tea, saving money as you do so (not advisable for black tea – but for

herbals, green and oolong, go for it!).

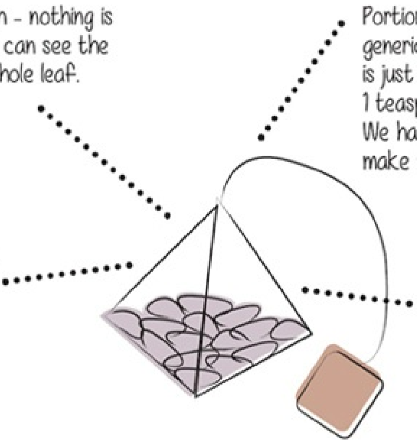
SMALL LEAF*

- Ugly duckling! Call us superficial but chopped-up tea leaves just don't look as good.
- Big-quantity, small-leaf, low-quality tea will mean a simplistic taste profile and lack-lustre appearance.
- Tastes like a teabag. Tea that's made from a teabag, tastes like a teabag, in our opinion. Since tea picks up scents, tea encased in paper can taste of the paper.
- Consistent. Some people like things to always taste the same so teabag brands have to blend tea to taste consistently the same. However, one of the wonders of tea is that it is seasonal and subject to amazing variation, taste-wise.
- One-off. All the flavour is extracted after just one steeping; it's then thrown away.

**There are some great smaller-leaf teas out there, so this includes some generalisations!*

The evolution of the tea temple

We have taken the finest whole-leaf teas and herbal infusions from all over the world, blended them to taste great and then, to make brewing easier and just a bit neater, we have popped them into our very own tea temples.



See-through – nothing is hidden, you can see the beautiful whole leaf.

Portion control – 1 teaspoon is a great generic measure; but 1 teaspoon of mint is just not enough and, in my opinion, 1 teaspoon of yerba mate is too much. We have optimised the amount of tea to make the perfect brew every time.

Room to brew – no one likes small spaces. Giving the big leaves a big space allows them to stretch and unfurl and release their big flavours.

Biodegradable – our tea temples are made from corn starch, so they're 'green'.

A LITTLE TEA ETIQUETTE

As with any custom or ritual that has been so embedded in history, tea comes with its own set of do's and don'ts. Of course, as tea is drunk the world over, there are some quite specific rules depending upon where you may be.

What not to do

As a general rule, if you'd like to be admired as a true British gentleman or lady when taking your tea, then you'd be best advised never to:

X let your teaspoon crash against the sides of your dainty bone china cup; it's just plain vulgar

X leave your teaspoon in your cup; it must always be placed on the saucer with the handle pointing in the same direction as the cup handle

X cradle your cup with your fingers; hold the handle with your thumb and forefinger but don't ever let your pinky extend out; apparently, it's seen as extravagant and attention seeking

X allow your saucer to travel further than 30 cm (12in) from your cup

X sip from your spoon (unless, of course, you are a tea taster like Louise)

X swirl your tea around your cup, as you might with wine, for instance

X slurp; absolutely don't slurp, just sip.

✓ Of course, if you just want to enjoy your tea and make it in a nice big mug, then you can do any or all of the above and no one will think any the worse of you! Just be sure to make your brew following our unbreakable rules to get the best out of your tea and enjoy it any time, anywhere.

Globetrotting tea drinkers: be aware!

Here are a few things to take on board for when you're drinking tea in a foreign country and want to be on your best behaviour.

Vietnam

An offer of tea at a reception or meeting is a ritual form of hospitality and should not be refused.

Russia

Don't hesitate to have your tea with a piece of cake, as it is considered quite rude to serve the tea 'naked'.

India

Reluctantly decline the first offer of tea and let your host insist. Then, after some insistence, politely cave in.

Germany

Don't stir if you've been made an East Frisian tea cloud.

Japan

Always taste your tea first before adding sugar or milk.

Argentina

Don't use the *bombilla* (straw) to stir the yerba mate in a gourd.

China

Express your thanks by gently tapping two fingers on the table. Just two, mind.

Morocco

If in a souk, finish your tea before haggling.

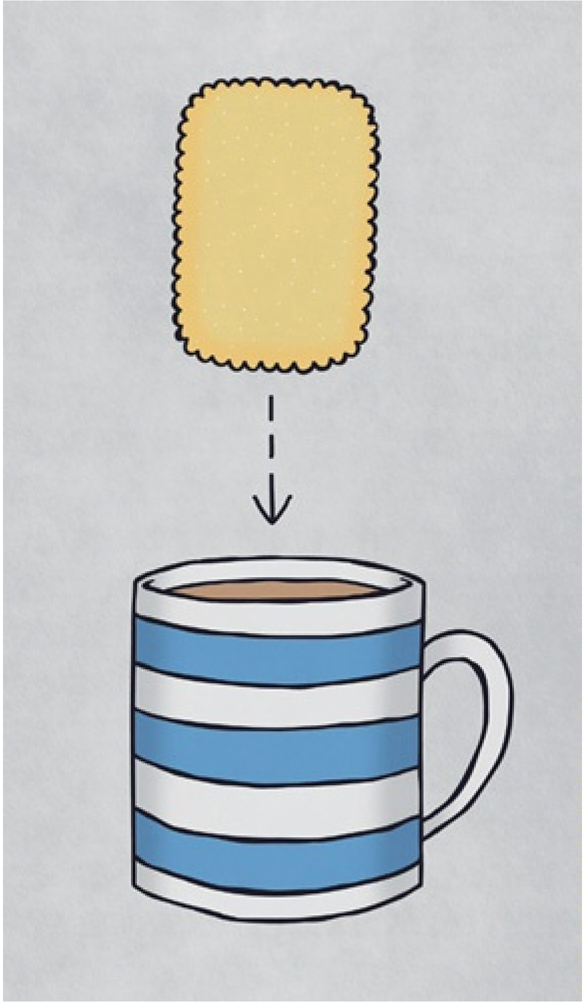
Turkey

Since it is offered all the time and everywhere, it is a gesture of hospitality and you must always take the tea, even if you only put it to your lips or just take a few sips.

Egypt

Always accept the cup of tea and/or coffee. Never pour your own drink. Even if you don’t want it, accept it anyway, and simply don’t drink it. If you refuse, your host may feel rejected.

Confessions of a tea dunker



Do you like to dunk biscuits into your tea? I do. If you're not sure what I'm on about, then let me give you a definition of the verb 'dunk'. *Dunk: to dip food into a drink before eating it.* Sounds straightforward, but in reality it's so much more complex than that. Read on to find out why.

I realise that dunking biscuits into tea may be a very British thing to do (although I have heard that Americans dip Oreos into milk and Aussies like to dip a Tim Tam in their brew), but how and where did this ritual originate?

Could it have come from one of the major tea-producing nations, such as China or India? Perhaps it was a Mayan pastime, originally using hot chocolate instead of tea and devised to keep them occupied after their calendar-making came to a halt? Or could it have been the Ancient Romans, who invented pretty much everything else? Despite some thorough research, my dear friends Google and Wikipedia failed to come up with a definite conclusion, at which point I decided to stop searching its origins and instead simply grabbed a biscuit and raised a cup to salute the fact that the glorious practice remains with us.

Who knew?

Some research has the roots of dunking biscuits aboard naval vessels. The incredibly dry biscuits (aimed at keeping the sailors nutrition levels up) kept really well for the long voyages of those times, but they were inedible unless dunked into something repeatedly – whether it was tea or rum is another matter.

SO, WHY DO WE DUNK?

It seems that there is just something inordinately satisfying about eating a warm, wet biscuit; the taste and texture of that just-soaked crumb brings with it a heart-warming comfort. Our taste buds work best when we eat warm or hot foods rather than cold, so our taste buds are telling us to dunk into a hot brew.

DARING TO DUNK

How brave are you when it comes to dunking? Are you a single dipper or do you like to double or, even, triple dunk? Of course, the biscuit itself matters here but it's also the thrill of running the gauntlet of getting that soggy crumb to your mouth without it ending up down your front. In my mind, it's akin to Russian roulette with biscuits. Will you overdo it ever so slightly and lose half of the biscuit to your milky brew? It's a risky business – just like deciding to twist rather than stick in a game of Blackjack or to carry on driving when the fuel gauge is flashing and the motorway sign says 'Next services in 1 mile or 67 miles'.

Daring to dunk just one more time – and getting away with it – is so rewarding, that I can't help but try it; afterwards tell anyone who cares (and plenty of people who don't).

THE BEST DUNKABLE BISCUITS

From personal experience, I find the type of biscuit is terribly important. Firm-textured, dense and tightly bound biscuits, such as Rich Tea and Digestives, are good bets; crumbly and brittle chocolate-chip cookies, for instance, are just asking for trouble. Some purists would say that a chocolate-coated biscuit is cheating – like applying a layer of clear nail varnish to a conker (did anyone else do that, or was it just me?) – while others would add that the chocolate meltiness adds an extra pleasurable sensation. I say that, provided the biscuit goes with the tea (sweet or neutral rather than salty, and black or rooibos tea, not green or white), you are very much the author of your own dunking destiny.

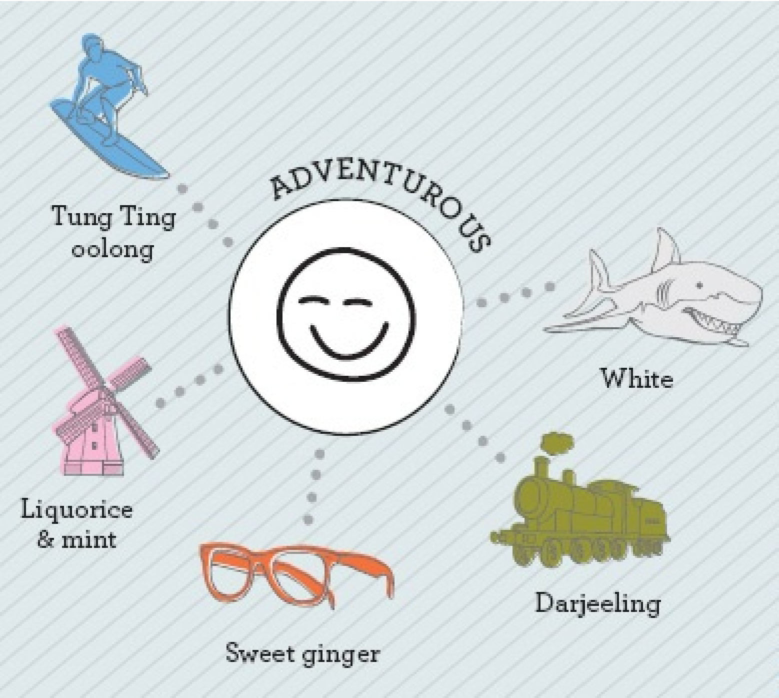
WHAT WE LIKE TO DUNK

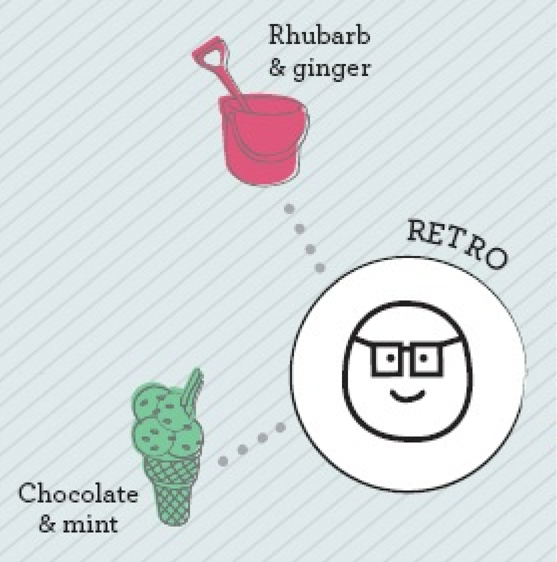
A quick straw poll around the teapigs office revealed the following preferences:

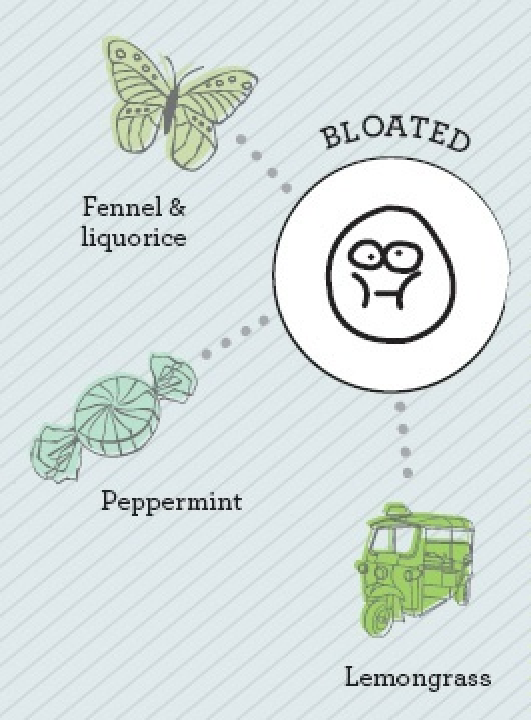
Nick Everyday Brew with milk, Bourbon (the biscuit, not the booze)
Louise Earl Grey Strong, no milk, Rich Tea biscuit
Nikki Darjeeling Earl Grey with milk, Gingernut biscuit

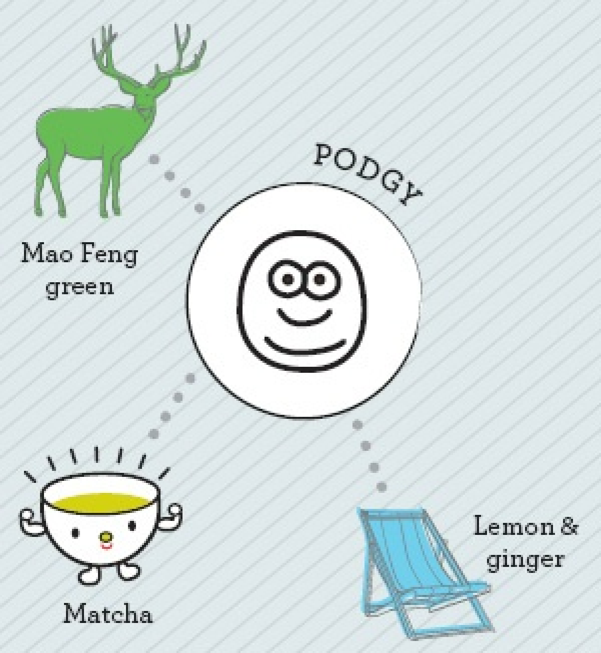
Nicole Everyday Brew, Rich Tea biscuit – nice and soggy
Tori Iced liquorice & mint, mint Club biscuit – double mint!
Lucy Darjeeling Earl Grey, Digestive biscuit
Reece Super fruit, pink wafer
Valerie Rooibos, dark-chocolate Digestive biscuit
Rosie Chai, Hobnob biscuit
Rachel Earl Grey Strong, fruit shortcake
Sofia Everyday Brew, Boaster biscuit
Reggie Rooibos Crème Caramel, chocolate cookie
Juliana Everyday Brew, Bourbon biscuit

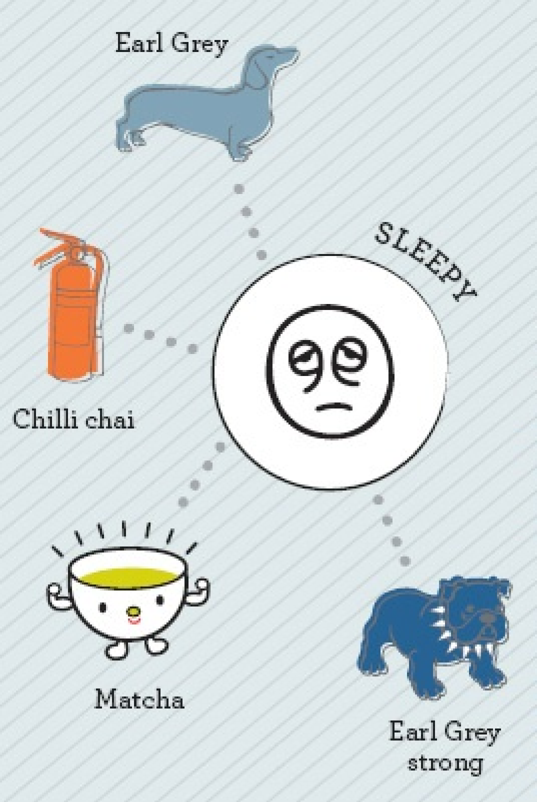
WHAT TEA MOOD ARE YOU IN TODAY?

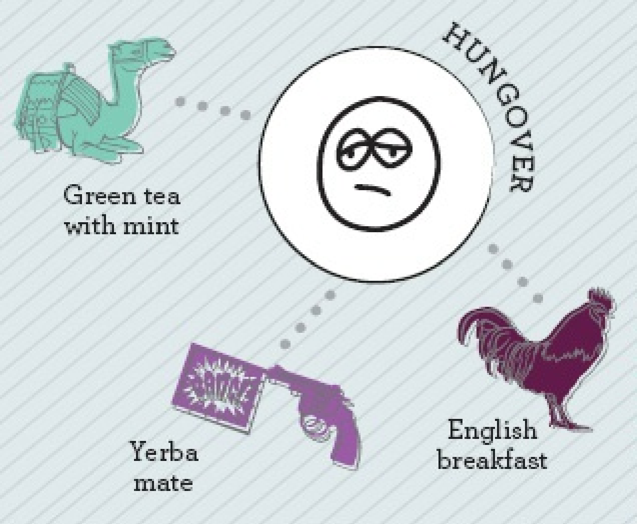

ADVENTUROUS
Tung Ting oolong
White
Liquorice & mint
Darjeeling
Sweet ginger

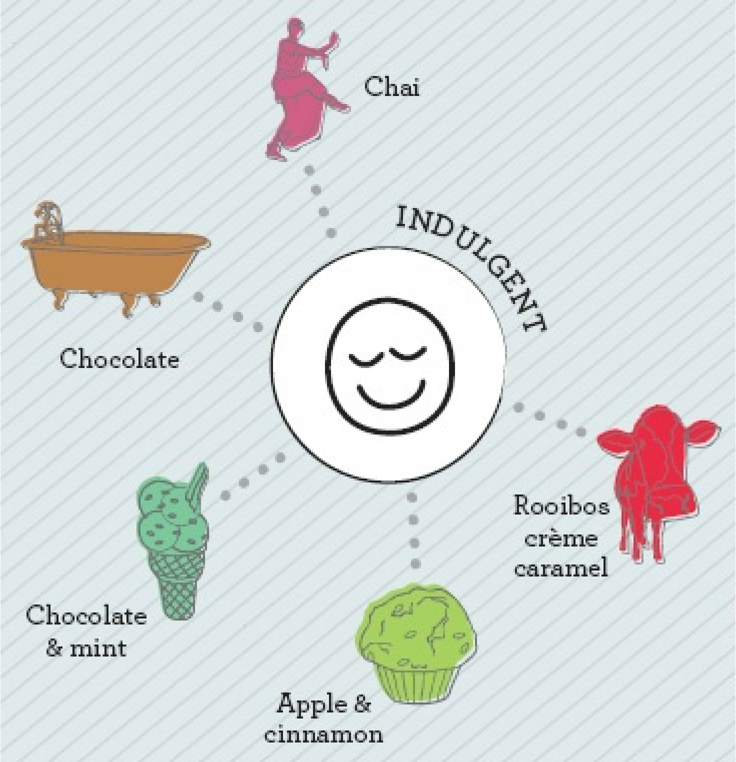

Rhubarb & ginger
RETRO
Chocolate & mint

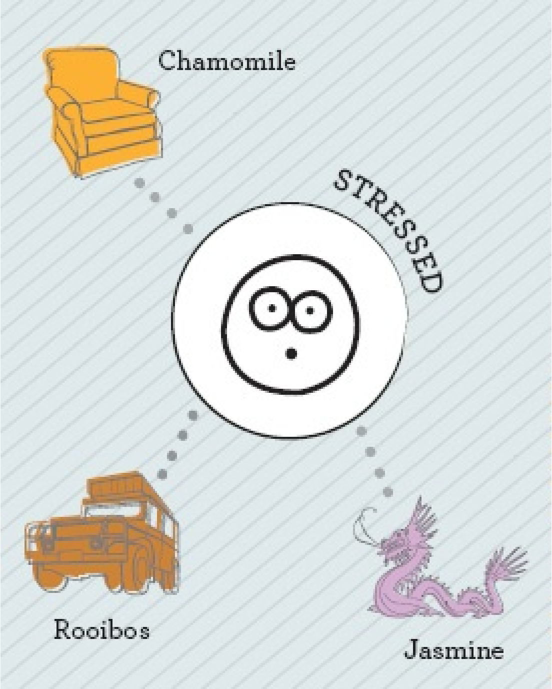

BLOATED
Fennel & liquorice
Peppermint
Lemongrass

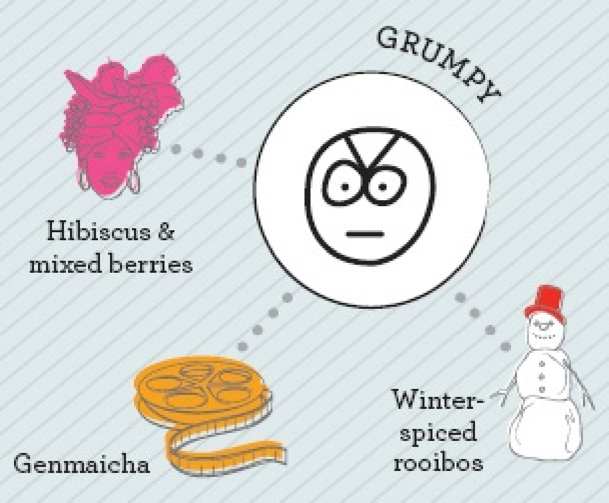

PODGY
Mao Feng green
Matcha
Lemon & ginger


Earl Grey
SLEEPY
Chilli chai
Matcha
Earl Grey strong


HUNGOVER
Green tea with mint
Yerba mate
English breakfast


INDULGENT
Chai
Chocolate
Rooibos crème caramel
Chocolate & mint
Apple & cinnamon


STRESSED
Chamomile
Rooibos
Jasmine


GRUMPY
Hibiscus & mixed berries
Genmaicha
Winter-spiced rooibos

RECIPES

Rhubarb and ginger tea.

TEA-INFUSED BEEF ON A GREEN PAPAYA SALAD
WITH WASABI DRESSING

People have been using tea to flavour meats and fish for many, many years in Asia. Tea is usually mixed with oils and spices to form a marinade, giving the meat or fish a very aromatic and delicate tea-like flavour. We love this beef and papaya salad.

SERVES 2

FOR THE TEA-INFUSED BEEF

1 tbsp yerba mate or Tung Ting oolong whole leaf tea
finely grated zest of 1 orange (use the juice for the salad)

4 tbsp olive oil
400g (14oz) steak (fillet or rump)

FOR THE PAPAYA SALAD WITH WASABI DRESSING

3 garlic cloves
a pinch of salt
3 tbsp unsalted, roasted peanuts
½ tsp wasabi paste
finely grated zest and juice of 1 lime
juice of 1 orange
1 tbsp fish sauce
1 tbsp rice vinegar
1 green papaya, about 400g (14oz)
1 large carrot
100g (3½oz) beansprouts
lettuce leaves, such as Little Gem or Cos, to serve

1 First, prepare the marinade for the beef. Place the tea leaves in a pestle and mortar or a spice grinder and grind to a fine dust, then sift. Add the orange zest and olive oil and stir. Rub this mix into the beef, cover and leave to marinate for 1–2 hours (in the fridge or at room temperature).

2 Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.

3 Now, for the salad dressing. Drop the garlic into a pestle and mortar with the salt and bash to crush well. Add 2 tablespoons of the peanuts and continue bashing until you get a coarse paste. Scrape into a large serving bowl and whisk in the wasabi, lime zest and juice. Then, stir in the orange juice, fish sauce and rice vinegar.

4 Next, peel the papaya, cut in half lengthways then place cut side down on a board and slice thinly. Cut again into thin, long matchstick strips and add them to the serving bowl.

5 Peel the carrot, cut in half then slice each piece into thin slices and again into long matchstick strips and tip into the bowl along with the beansprouts. Now, toss everything together well.

6 To cook the beef, heat an ovenproof pan on a high heat and sear the meat all over. Transfer to the preheated oven and cook for 3–5 minutes. Remove from the oven, lift the steak onto a plate and allow to rest for 10 minutes.

7 Thinly slice the beef and arrange on top of the papaya salad and lettuce leaves, sprinkle with the remaining peanuts and serve.

CHICKEN TEA BROTH WITH GREEN TEA SOBA NOODLES AND MARBLED TEA EGGS

In this typical Asian recipe, there's tea in the broth, tea in the noodles and tea in the eggs – we love that! We think marbled eggs look like something only a kitchen genius could produce, so go ahead and impress your guests with this unusually artistic and very warming broth.

SERVES 4–6

FOR THE CHICKEN
2 tbsp sesame oil

5cm (2in) piece of fresh root ginger, finely grated
2 garlic cloves, crushed with a pinch of salt
1 tbsp Shaosing rice wine or sherry
¼ tsp freshly ground white pepper
1 tbsp of fish sauce
4 boneless chicken thighs (about 400g/14oz)

FOR THE MARBLED TEA EGGS

6 eggs
1.5 litres (2 pints 10fl oz) water
250ml (8½fl oz) dark soy sauce
2 star anise
2 tbsp Tung Ting oolong whole leaf tea
1 cinnamon stick
a pinch of chilli flakes
1 tbsp Sichuan peppercorns (optional)

FOR THE HERB SALSA

25g (1oz) coriander leaves, finely chopped
25g (1oz) mint, finely chopped
1 green chilli, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tbsp chopped pistachio nuts
3 tbsp sesame oil
3 tbsp rice vinegar
finely grated zest of 1 lime
salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE BROTH

1.5 litres (2 pints 10fl oz) water
6 tbsp green whole leaf tea
a pinch of salt
200g (7oz) green tea soba noodles
200g (7oz) green leaves (baby spinach or small leaves pak choi), roughly chopped
350g (12oz) edamame (soy beans), peas or skinned broad beans, defrosted if frozen
6 spring onions, finely sliced
1 tbsp black sesame seeds
wasabi paste, optional or to serve

1 Mix the sesame oil, ginger, garlic and Shaosing together and season with white pepper and fish sauce in a bowl. Cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces and stir together well. Leave to marinate for at least an hour or overnight in the fridge.

2 Next, prepare the marbled tea eggs. Bring a small pan of water to the boil and gently lower in the eggs. Bring back to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Take them out of the water and refresh straightaway with cold

water. Then, using the back of a teaspoon, gently tap and crack the eggshell all over, but be careful to keep the shell intact; you're not removing the shell at this stage.

3 Pour the measured water into a pan with all of the remaining ingredients. Bring the mixture to the boil, then immediately turn the heat to low. Simmer gently for 20 minutes, then turn off the heat, add the cracked eggs, cover with a lid and let the eggs steep for a few hours or overnight. Then, carefully remove the egg shells to reveal the marbled effect beneath.

4 Mix all the ingredients for the salsa together in a small bowl and set aside while you make the broth. Pour the measured water into a large pan, bring to the boil, then remove from the heat and stir in the tea leaves. Cover and leave to steep for 10 minutes, then strain through a fine sieve into a clean pan.

5 Bring the pan back to the boil with a pinch of salt, stir in the soba noodles, return to the boil again, then pour in 240ml (8fl oz) of cold water. Repeat this method twice more, then the noodles should be just tender. Hook out the noodles with tongs and set aside. Add the chicken pieces to the broth, along with any marinade and simmer gently for 5–10 minutes or until tender.

6 Taste for seasoning and adjust to taste, stir in the green leaves, edamame, spring onions and tea eggs – keep the eggs whole as they look so beautiful – and simmer for a few minutes more or until the leaves are just tender. Serve sprinkled with the sesame seeds, some wasabi, if you like, and a spoonful of salsa.

TEA-SMOKED DUCK BREASTS WITH SPICED PEARS

This recipe – from Lindy Wildsmith's amazing book *Cured* – can be made with commercially smoked duck breast, but if you'd like to have a go at hot smoking your own then this tea-smoked duck is even more delicious. It is so simple and the duck is so unbelievably tender. It's best served warm.

SERVES 4 AS A STARTER

125g (4¼oz) rocket, spinach, watercress and beetroot leaf salad
100g (3½oz) green beans, lightly cooked in salted boiling water, drained, plunged into ice water and drained again
4 spring onions, shredded

10cm (4in) piece of cucumber, cut into matchsticks
50g (1¾oz) purple radish sprouts (or radishes work well too, sliced thinly)
2 x 150g (5½oz) duck breasts, tea-smoked (see box below)
50g (1¾oz) walnut pieces

FOR THE SPICED PEARS
250ml (8½fl oz) perry vinegar or cider vinegar
20g (¾oz) fresh root ginger, peeled
1 garlic clove
½ tsp cumin seeds
1 bay leaf
1 star anise
a pinch of ground mace
a pinch of sea salt
100g (3½oz) light muscovado sugar
750g (1lb 11¾oz) firm pears, peeled and cut in half

FOR THE DRESSING
1 tsp thyme leaves
2 tbsp walnut oil
2 tbsp olive oil
5 tsp red wine vinegar
1 tsp runny honey
a pinch of sea salt

1 First, make the spiced pears. Put the vinegar, ginger, garlic, cumin seeds, bay leaf, star anise, mace, salt and sugar in a pan and bring to simmering point. Cook gently until the sugar has dissolved, then increase the heat and boil for 5 minutes to reduce.

2 Poach the pear halves in the spiced syrup until tender. Reserve 2 pear halves and slice them for this recipe and transfer the rest to a sterilised jar and seal.

3 Next, make the salad dressing. Put all the dressing ingredients in a screw-top jar, replace the lid and shake well. Taste and adjust as necessary.

4 Smoke the duck breasts, see box below. If you prefer crispy duck skin then sear the duck breast in a hot frying pan after the smoking and before slicing. Otherwise, slice the tea-smoked duck breasts thinly.

5 Now, to assemble the salad. Put the salad leaves, beans, spring onion, cucumber and purple radish sprouts in a bowl. Drizzle over the dressing and toss lightly. Either divide the salad between 4 plates and arrange the pears and the duck breast on the side, sprinkled with the walnut pieces or arrange the duck and pears on top of the salad and serve from the salad bowl – whichever you prefer.

DIY HOT SMOKING WITH TEA

You can hot smoke at home without going to the trouble or expense of buying special kit. Simply use a heavy-based lidded wok or steamer with a cooking rack inside, or use the steamer basket. You can even use a covered heavy-based roasting tin with a trivet. If you don't want to ruin said pots and pans forever, line the base and sides with several layers of foil. Spread some rice over the base of the pan along with some of your favourite tea leaves (a teaspoon or so) to aromatise the duck and sprinkle over some plain sugar, which will be the fuel. Then, place the duck breasts on the rack. Set your improvised smoker over a high heat for 10 minutes, which is long enough to ignite the fuel. Unless you have a professional venting system in your kitchen, use a gas barbecue outdoors to ignite your fuel, then it can puff away. Hot smoking is basically cooking with the added element of smoke and therefore you can mostly follow the cooking times you would use for other quick-cooking processes. Duck breasts take 20–30 minutes; but, for example, scallops, oysters, mussels and prawns would take mere minutes, thin fillets of fish not much longer, with big pieces of meat taking much longer. But there is no substitute for experimenting to achieve the right results. As a general guideline, when the meat or fish turns opaque, it is ready. Happy (tea) smoking!

MAO FENG CORIANDER PRAWNS

Throughout Asia, tea is used in lots of fish dishes. It's popular to smoke fish with tea, but you can use it to add depth to sauces and – in this instance – batters. In this yummy prawn dish, the batter is light and fragrant and the herb sauce is super-tasty.

SERVES 4 AS A STARTER

300g (10½oz) shelled raw tiger prawns, with tail on and deveined

FOR THE HERB SAUCE

150ml (5fl oz) water
1 tbsp Mao Feng green whole leaf tea
2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
a 5cm (2in) piece of fresh root ginger, finely grated
1 medium red or green chilli, deseeded and roughly chopped
3 spring onions, chopped
25g (1oz) coriander leaves and stalks, chopped 50g (1¾oz) watercress, chopped
1 small avocado, stoned and peeled
juice of 1 lime
sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE BATTER

3 eggs and 3 egg whites
100g (3½oz) potato flour
2 tbsp Mao Feng green whole leaf tea
a small handful of whole coriander leaves groundnut oil, for deep-frying
lime wedges, to serve

1 To make the sauce, in a pan bring the measured water to the boil and add the tea leaves, followed by the garlic, ginger, chilli and spring onions. Remove from the heat and leave all to infuse for 5 minutes.

2 Stir in the chopped coriander and watercress and stir until wilted. Cool slightly then transfer to a food processor and whizz along with the avocado, lime juice and a pinch of salt, until smooth. Season with black pepper.

3 Next, get on with the batter. Beat the whole eggs and potato flour in a bowl until smooth. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until they reach soft peaks. Beat one-third of the whites into the flour, along with the tea leaves and coriander leaves and then gently fold in the rest of the beaten egg whites.

4 Put a wok or deep pan over a high heat and fill to a quarter of its depth with groundnut oil. Heat the oil to 180°C (350°F), or until a cube of bread turns brown in 15 seconds. Dip the prawns in the batter one by one and carefully lower them into the oil; you'll need to cook them in several batches. Cook until golden, turning occasionally, then lift from the oil and drain on kitchen paper. Sprinkle with sea salt and serve hot with lime wedges.

LEMONGRASS TEA-SMOKED MACKEREL WITH RHUBARB RELISH

We think smoked mackerel is delicious. And tea-smoked mackerel, as here, is even more delicious. The relish – made with lemongrass tea and rhubarb – gives you a wonderfully citrus sharpness that works perfectly with the smoky, oily fish.

SERVES 4

FOR THE RHUBARB RELISH
200g (7oz) golden caster sugar
100ml (3½fl oz) red wine or cider vinegar
6 tbsp lemongrass whole leaf tea, tied in a muslin bag
1 red chilli, finely chopped
6 spring onions, finely sliced
550g (1lb 3½oz) rhubarb, untrimmed weight (450g/1lb trimmed)

FOR THE MACKEREL

100g (3½oz) light brown sugar
100g (3½oz) rice
100g (3½oz) Mao Feng green loose tea
4 mackerel fillets, about 150g (5½oz) each with skin on
salt and freshly ground black pepper
oil, for greasing
lime wedges and salad leaves, to serve

1 First, make the rhubarb relish. In a pan, pop the sugar, vinegar and tea in the muslin. Bring the liquid to the boil, stirring every now and then to dissolve the sugar. Add the chilli, reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the spring onion and cook for a further 5 minutes. Finally, add the rhubarb and cook for 3–4 minutes or until just tender. Remove from the heat and leave to cool and infuse. Then squeeze out all the liquid from the muslin bag.

2 Mix the sugar, rice and tea leaves together and place on a double sheet of foil in the bottom of a large wok and place a trivet on top (you can use a round cake cooling tray as the trivet).

3 Season the mackerel and lay each fillet on a piece of parchment paper, skin side up in a single layer on the trivet. Start to heat over a moderate heat until the tea just starts to smoulder, then cover very tightly with a lid or a tent of foil. Turn off the heat and let the mackerel cook for 15 minutes.

4 Serve the mackerel with the rhubarb relish, lime wedges and salad.

MATCHA, CHOCOLATE AND GINGER TIRAMISU

Why use coffee when you could use tea?! Especially when you could use chocolate tea and Matcha. In this delicious twist on the traditional tiramisu, the tea flavours work a treat with the creamy mascarpone, and the ginger gives an extra yummy kick.

SERVES 6–8

150ml (5fl oz) water
4 chocolate flake tea temples (or other chocolate whole leaf mesh tea bags)
250g (9oz) plain sponge, chocolate cake or Green tea pound cake
2 eggs, separated
3 tbsp golden caster sugar
½ tsp vanilla extract
500g (1lb 2oz) mascarpone
1 knob stem ginger, finely chopped (optional)

FOR DECORATION

cocoa powder
Matcha

1 Pour the measured water into a small pan and bring to the boil. Pop in the chocolate tea temples (or whole leaf mesh bags, if using), then remove the pan from the heat and leave to infuse for 15 minutes, then squeeze out the tea temples and transfer the liquid into a shallow dish.

2 Cut the cake into 8 x 2cm (3¼ x ¾in) long fingers. Dip each finger into the tea mixture, then use these to line a dish, evenly pouring over any

remaining tea.

3 In a bowl, beat the egg yolks with the sugar and vanilla until light, then beat in a little of the mascarpone and then beat in the rest with the chopped stem ginger.

4 In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until they reach soft peaks. Beat one-third of the whites into the mascarpone mixture and then gently fold in the rest. Spoon this mixture over the soaked cake in the dish.

5 Dust with cocoa, sprinkle with a little Matcha powder, cover and set aside in the fridge for at least an hour before serving.

EARL GREY HEARTS

If you love Earl Grey tea then what could be better than Earl Grey-flavoured biscuits to go with it? This recipe is from *Country Living's* Food & Drink Editor, Alison Walker's book *Handmade Gifts from the Kitchen* – make them for yourself as a treat or give them as a gift for any tea lover.

MAKES 25–30

175g (6oz) plain flour
50g (1¾oz) icing sugar
1 tsp Earl Grey strong whole leaf tea
100g (3½oz) butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
1 medium egg yolk

1 Put the flour, icing sugar and tea into a food processor. Add the rest of the ingredients and whizz to form a soft dough. Shape into a disc, wrap in clingfilm and chill for 20 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5, and lightly grease 2 or 3 baking sheets.

3 Remove the dough from the fridge and lightly flour a work surface. Roll out to a 5mm (¼in) thickness, cut out shapes with a 5cm (2in) heart-shaped cutter (or various sizes) and space apart on the baking sheets.

4 Bake in the preheated oven for 8–10 minutes until lightly golden. Leave to cool on the sheets for a couple of minutes before transferring to wire racks

to cool completely. These biscuits keep for up to 4 weeks in an airtight container or sealed packet.

EARL GREY MACARONS WITH LEMON OR LAVENDER

Macarons are such a treat. Light and delicate, sweet and creamy, and fancy-looking all at the same time. The bergamot flavouring in Earl Grey is just perfect with the almondy loveliness of these macarons. You friends will be impressed too!

MAKES ABOUT 20

FOR THE MACARONS
175g (6¼oz) icing sugar
125g (4¼oz) ground almonds
2 tbsp Earl Grey strong whole leaf tea

3 large egg whites
a pinch of salt
75g (2¾oz) caster sugar

FOR A LAVENDER FILLING
½ tbsp dried lavender, ground
75g (2¾oz) icing sugar
100g (3½oz) butter, softened

FOR A LEMON FILLING
100g (3½oz) butter, softened
finely grated zest and juice of ½ lemon, plus more juice, to taste
75g (2¾oz) icing sugar

1 Preheat the oven to 160°C/310°F/gas mark 2½.

2 Make the macarons. Whizz the icing sugar, almonds and tea leaves in a food processor until they are very finely ground.

3 Whisk the egg whites with a pinch of salt until they form soft peaks, then gradually whisk in the caster sugar, a spoonful at a time, until the meringue is thick and glossy.

4 Next, fold half of the almond and tea mixture into the meringue and mix well, then fold in the remaining mix, until it is smooth and shiny and has a ribbon-like consistency. Spoon half of the mixture into a piping bag with a 1cm (½in) nozzle.

5 Line 2 baking sheets with baking parchment and pipe into 40 small rounds, about 3cm (1¼in) across; they will expand just a little when they cook. Leave to stand at room temperature for 10–15 minutes to form a slight skin – you should be able to touch them lightly without any mixture sticking to your finger. Bake for 15 minutes, then remove from the oven, slide the trays onto cooling racks and leave to cool completely on the paper. Meanwhile get on with making your choice of fillings.

6 For the lavender filling, whizz the dried lavender flowers with the icing sugar in a food processor until very fine then sift into a bowl. In another bowl, beat the butter until light and fluffy then beat in the lavender-flavoured icing sugar. It’s now ready to use.

7 For the lemon filling, beat the butter with the lemon zest until light and fluffy, then gradually beat in the icing sugar and half of the juice. Once smooth, taste, adding more lemon juice if needed.

8 Sandwich 2 macarons with a teaspoon of your chosen filling and continue in this way to use all the filling and all the macarons to create a batch of these little treats.

CHAI HOT CROSS BUN BREAD AND BUTTER PUDDING

Bread and butter pudding is one of the most comforting puds. This version uses hot cross buns (genius!) and the chai tea with all its spices adds heaps more warmth and flavour. We love to make them in individual cups for cuteness.

SERVES 6

300ml (10fl oz) milk
300ml (10fl oz) single cream
2 tbsp chai whole leaf tea
2 eggs
75g (2¾oz) golden caster sugar
6 hot cross buns
50g (1¾oz) butter, softened

1 Pour the milk and cream into a pan and sprinkle in the chai. Bring to just below the boil, remove from the heat and then leave to steep for 5 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, whisk the eggs with the sugar in a bowl and strain the tea-infused cream mixture through a sieve (to remove the tea leaves) and onto the eggs and sugar, whisking all the time. You now have a custard; it will thicken up as it bakes.

3 Cut each hot cross bun horizontally into 3 equally sized slices and butter 1 side of each piece. Place the bottom third of each bun into the bases of six 200ml (7fl oz) ramekins, mugs or even large tea cups.

4 Pour a little of the custard into each ramekin or cup, then add the middle section of the buns. Add more of the custard to each until it is all used up, then top with the last slices of the buns, with the cross uppermost. Press slightly but don't submerge the tops. Set aside for 30 minutes to soak. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.

5 Arrange the ramekins or cups in a roasting tin, place in the oven and carefully fill the tin with boiling water until it comes halfway up the cups. Bake for about 20 minutes or until just cooked, but a bit wobbly in the centre. Serve warm but not hot.

GREEN TEA POUND CAKE

Roger Pizey knows a thing or two about cakes and we love his version of this delicious cake (taken from his book *World's Best Cakes*), which uses one of our favourite ingredients – Matcha. In this 'East meets West' cake, the subtle flavour of the Japanese green tea infuses a Western pound cake – with fabulous and colourful results.

SERVES 10

375g (13oz) plain flour
1 tsp baking powder
2 tbsp Matcha
275g (9¾oz) butter, softened
275g (9¾oz) caster sugar
4 eggs, beaten

1 Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/gas mark 3, and grease and line a 25cm long x 8 x 8cm (10 x 3¼ x 3¼in) deep loaf tin with baking parchment.

2 Sift the flour, baking powder and Matcha together into a bowl.

3 Cream the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy, and then slowly add the eggs, mixing in a little flour halfway through.

4 Add the rest of the flour mixture and mix together until fully combined.

5 Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and bake in the preheated oven for 40–50 minutes. Allow to cool for 10 minutes in the tin and then turn out onto a wire rack, then strip off the baking parchment.

6 Serve with green tea or any other delicately flavoured tea.

TEA LOAF

Many nations have their own version of this delicious tea loaf, but here's a great tried-and-tested recipe from all-round creative Jane Brocket. This cake has a lovely texture and taste, slices beautifully and is delicious spread with butter and served with hot tea. You can use a basic black tea to soak the fruit or mix it up with aromatic varieties, such as Earl Grey or lapsang souchong.

SERVES 8–10

375g (13oz) mixed dried fruit and peel

250ml (8½fl oz) strained, cold tea (strong, no milk or sugar)
butter, for greasing
150g (5½oz) soft brown sugar or muscovado sugar (dark or light)
1 egg, lightly beaten
250g (9oz) plain flour
1 heaped tsp baking powder
a pinch of mixed spice, grated nutmeg or ground cloves (optional)
finely grated zest of 1 lemon

1 Begin the night before with soaking the fruit. Put the dried fruit and cold tea in a mixing bowl. Cover and leave to soak overnight at room temperature.

2 Next day, when you are ready to bake, preheat the oven to 160°C/310°F/gas mark 3, and grease and line a 22 x 11 x 7cm (8½ x 4¼ x 2¾in) loaf tin.

3 Add the sugar and egg to the soaked fruit and mix well with a wooden spoon or flexible spatula. Sift in the flour, baking powder and spice (if using), and mix well until thoroughly combined.

4 Spoon the mixture into the prepared loaf tin and level the surface with the back of the spoon. Bake in the centre of the oven for 1–1¼ hours until a metal skewer or sharp knife inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.

5 Remove from the oven, transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool before turning out of the tin. Serve in slices with or without butter, whichever you prefer.

FRUIT CAKES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

We like to maximise the fruitiness of this fruit cake by soaking the dried fruit in a strong brew, just as in Jane Brocket's recipe above. The Welsh fruit loaf – *bara brith* – also uses tea in this way; as does the Irish *barmbrack,* which is brought out at Halloween – this cake has added coins (for good luck). North of the border, the Scots like to use a tot of sherry (rather than tea) in their classic Dundee cake. Elsewhere in the world, other flavours can make yet more delicious fruit cakes. In the Caribbean, for instance, rum is a favourite added flavour; but you'll also find rum in the classic Eastern European fruity cakes, such as Cozonac, which is traditionally eaten at Easter. In the past, American fruit cakes used brandy or a strong alcoholic liqueur but mostly these are alcohol-free nowadays. We reckon they should try our tea-based version!

CHAI AND CHESTNUT MUFFINS WITH CHILLI CHAI TEA GLAZE

Chestnuts – all comforting and Christmassy – taste amazing in this muffin recipe that uses chai tea (with its warming spices) and a yummy, sticky, chai tea glaze. They are perfect with a steaming mug of chai latte when it's cold outside.

SERVES 6

FOR THE CHAI GLAZE

50g (1¾oz) icing sugar
juice of 1 lemon
2 chilli chai tea temples (or 4 tsp chilli chai or chai whole leaf tea)

FOR THE MUFFINS

250ml (8½fl oz) milk
250g (9oz) cooked chestnuts
1 tbsp chai whole leaf tea
2 eggs, beaten
100g (3½oz) golden caster sugar
180g (6½oz) plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
a pinch of salt

1 First, make the glaze. Place the icing sugar, lemon juice and tea temples (or whole leaf tea, if using) into a small pan and heat gently, remove from the heat then set aside to cool and infuse. Meanwhile, pour milk into another pan and pop in the chestnuts and other whole leaf tea. Bring to just below the boil, then remove from the heat and leave to infuse for 30 minutes.

2 Preheat the oven at 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6 and line a 12-hole muffin tin with cases. Meanwhile, beat the eggs in a large bowl and then strain the infused milk over the eggs and beat together. Reserve one-third of the chestnuts from the sieve and transfer the rest to the bowl of a food processor along with the sugar and whizz until smooth. Whisk this into the egg and milk mixture.

3 Next, sift the flour, baking powder and salt together into a bowl, crumble in the reserved chestnuts and fold this into the egg mixture.

4 Place a spoonful of mixture into each paper case, filling each just over halfway. Bake for 15–20 minutes in a preheated oven, or until golden brown.

5 Remove the tin from the oven and transfer to a wire rack to cool. Lift or strain the tea temples (or tea leaves, if using) from the syrup, and brush it on the top of each muffin while they are still hot (this makes for a shinier glaze) and leave to cool for 5 minutes before lifting the muffins out of the tin and onto the rack to cool completely.

APPLE AND CINNAMON TEA FLAPJACK

Good-quality fruit and herbal teas made with whole ingredients give you lots of intense flavour. The apple and cinnamon tea make these flapjacks fruity, moist and generally ultra-yummy.

MAKES 24 PIECES

150ml (5fl oz) boiling water
9 apple and cinnamon tea temples (or 6 tbsp apple and cinnamon whole leaf tea)
300g (10½oz) unsalted butter
75g (2¾oz) light brown muscovado sugar
125g (4¼oz) golden syrup
1 apple, peeled and grated
200g (7oz) rolled oats
200g (7oz) jumbo oats
200g (7oz) mixture of seeds and nuts (we used sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, goji berries, dried blueberries, dried cranberries and pine nuts)
a pinch of sea salt

1 Pour the boiling water into a bowl with the tea temples (or whole leaf tea, if using) and leave to infuse for 1 hour.

2 Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/gas mark 3, and line a 25 x 30cm (10 x 12in) baking tray with baking parchment.

3 Place the butter in a heavy-based pan over a low heat. When the butter has melted, give it a stir, remove from the heat and stir in the sugar and golden syrup followed by the strained, infused tea (squeeze out the tea

temples to get every ounce of flavour out). Stir until well combined, then add the grated apple, oats, the seed and nut mixture and salt and mix well.

4 Tip the mixture into the prepared baking tray and spread evenly, pressing down with the back of a spoon. Bake for 20–30 minutes, or until golden.

5 Remove from the oven and leave the flapjack to cool for a few minutes in the baking tray. While it is still warm, mark it into squares with a knife. Once it's completely cold, simply break the flapjack into pieces; they should snap away cleanly where you've marked them. Enjoy with a cup of tea!

JEWISH HONEY CAKE

Traditionally this cake is served at Jewish New Year – Rosh Hashanah – a time to reflect on the past and look forward to the future. We love that tea is involved in such celebrations. The tea makes this cake beautifully moist. This cake works best when it is made a few days before being served, so says chef pâtissier Roger Pizey, as the sweet honey flavours develop over time.

SERVES 8

150g (5½oz) brown sugar
1 egg
280ml (9½fl oz) cold tea (we used 2 morning glory tea temples or 4 tsp English Breakfast whole leaf tea to make a nice brew)
150ml (5fl oz) vegetable oil
180g (6½oz) honey
330g (11½oz) self-raising flour
½ tsp mixed spice
½ tsp ground ginger
½ tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

1 Preheat the oven to 160°C/310°F/gas mark 2½, and grease and line a 21cm (8in) round cake tin with baking parchment.

2 Combine the sugar, egg, tea, oil and honey well in one bowl. In a separate bowl, sift the dry ingredients and then mix everything together.

3 Pour the cake mixture into the prepared cake tin and bake for 1 hour or until a cocktail stick inserted into the centre comes out clean.

4 Remove from the oven, allow to cool for 10 minutes in the tin and then turn out onto a wire rack and strip off the baking parchment. Enjoy this cake at teatime or after dinner as a tasty dessert.

MATCHA & PISTACHIO CUPCAKES WITH WHITE CHOCOLATE FROSTING

We love anything that contains Matcha (we're total tea nuts after all), but Matcha tastes especially delicious with white chocolate and anything nutty, so these cupcakes are mindblowingly good. Creamy, sweet with a delicate green tea flavour. Yes please!

MAKES 24

180g (6½oz) self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tbsp Matcha
a pinch of sea salt
180g (6½oz) unsalted butter, softened
180g (6½oz) caster sugar
½ tsp vanilla extract
3 large eggs
100g (3½oz) pistachios, chopped

FOR THE WHITE CHOCOLATE FROSTING
300ml (10fl oz) double cream
½ vanilla pod
100g (3½oz) white chocolate, chopped

1 Make the chocolate frosting. Put half of the cream in a pan. Cut the vanilla pod in half lengthways and scrape out the seeds into the cream, and drop in the pod. Bring to just below the boil then remove from the heat, remove and discard the used pod and whisk in the chopped chocolate until smooth. Cool then place in the fridge and leave to chill for about an hour.

2 When the frosting's almost ready, preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4, and line 2 12-hole cupcake tins with 24 paper cases.

3 In a bowl, sift the flour, baking powder, Matcha and salt together.

4 In a separate bowl, beat the butter, sugar and vanilla together until very smooth. Add the eggs one at a time, adding some flour halfway through, if necessary, and beating well after each addition.

5 Fold the flour mixture into the egg mixture along with three-quarters of the chopped pistachios (keep the rest for decorating later on).

6 Spoon the cupcake mixture into the cases and bake for 15–20 minutes or until risen and slightly golden.

7 Remove the cupcakes from the oven and transfer to a wire rack to cool for 5 minutes, then remove from the tins and leave to cool completely.

8 In another bowl, whip the remaining cream until it reaches soft peaks. Beat in one-third of the whipped cream into the chilled chocolate cream mixture and then fold in the remainder. Transfer to a piping bag ready for decorating the cupcakes. Pipe the frosting onto the cupcakes, spread a little with a knife and then top with a sprinkle of the remaining chopped pistachios.

MATCHA TRUFFLES

Matcha works so well with chocolate. You can buy these truffles from premium food halls, but it's more fun to make your own, especially when the truffley part is that wondrously bright green.

MAKES ABOUT 40 TRUFFLES

FOR THE TRUFFLES

120ml (4fl oz) double cream
300g (10½oz) white chocolate, finely chopped
2 tbsp Matcha, plus extra for dusting

FOR THE COATING

100g (3½oz) each of white, milk and dark chocolate
icing sugar, for dusting

1 Bring the cream to the boil in a small pan. Remove from the heat and tip in the white chocolate and whisk quickly until the chocolate is melted and smooth.

2 Sift in the Matcha and beat well again. Pour the chocolate mixture into a bowl, cover and chill for 4–5 hours or until completely set.

3 Using a teaspoon, scoop out small spoonfuls of the truffle mixture onto a tray or a plate and return to the fridge for 10–15 minutes.

4 When the mixture has firmed up again, dust the palm of your hand lightly with a little icing sugar and roll each piece of truffle mixture into a neat ball and place back on the tray. Return to the fridge while you melt the

chocolate.

5 Melt the chocolate in three separate bowls. Using one bowl of melted chocolate at a time, spoon a little of the chocolate onto a plate and roll a ball of truffle evenly around to coat and return to the tray. Repeat with one-quarter of the truffles and place these back in the fridge. Repeat with the remaining truffles and melted chocolate, then recoat the first truffles. You'll need to roll the truffles in the melted chocolate about three times, until you've used all the chocolate up and to get a good coating. Roll the remaining quarter of truffles in cocoa powder. Finally, sprinkle all the truffles with a little more Matcha powder before the chocolate sets.

MATCHA AND CHOCOLATE SHORTBREAD

It’s hard to imagine a more perfect partner for a cuppa as William Curley’s melt-in-the-mouth recipe marries two of our favourite things – shortbread and Matcha.

MAKES ABOUT 60

185g (6½oz) plain flour, sifted
125g (4½oz) unsalted butter, cut into cubes, at room temperature
60g (2oz) caster sugar
1 tsp Matcha, plus extra for dusting
500g (1lb 2oz) fine dark chocolate, melted, to coat

1 Put all the ingredients, except the chocolate, into a bowl and mix until the ingredients come together in a dough.

2 Remove from the bowl. Roll the dough to 5mm (¼in) thick on a lightly floured surface. Cut into 4cm (1½in) squares and transfer to a baking tray lined with a non-stick baking mat or baking parchment. Leave to rest for at least 1 hour in the fridge.

3 Preheat the oven to 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3. Bake the shortbread in the preheated oven for 20–25 minutes until lightly golden. Remove from the oven and transfer to a wire rack to cool. Dip in melted dark chocolate and dust with Matcha powder. (If you prefer and have time, you could temper the chocolate so that you keep its wonderful shine.)

LIQUORICE AND MINT CHOC CHIP ICE CREAM
WITH DARK CHOCOLATE TUILLE

Wow, wow, wow! This is 100% our favourite ice cream flavour. Naturally sweet liquorice, super-fresh mint, dark chocolate and wonderfully creamy ice cream – it's an explosion of amazing flavours. And you can make a chocolate tuille to go with it, if you're feeling fancy.

MAKES 1.6 LITRES (2 PINTS 14FL OZ)

FOR THE ICE CREAM

1 litre (1¾ pints) whole milk

300ml (10fl oz) double cream
7 tbsp liquorice and mint whole leaf tea
6 egg yolks
250g (9oz) sugar
100g (3½oz) dark chocolate, finely chopped, or dark chocolate chips

FOR THE CHOCOLATE TUILLE (MAKES ABOUT 20 TUILLES)

50g (1¾oz) plain flour
1 tbsp cocoa powder
50g (1¾oz) unsalted butter, softened
50g (1¾oz) icing sugar
1 large egg white, lightly beaten with a tiny pinch of salt

1 Pour the milk and cream into a pan and sprinkle in the tea leaves. Bring to the boil, remove from the heat and steep for 1 hour.

2 Next, whisk the egg yolks with the sugar in a bowl and strain the tea-infused cream mixture through a sieve (to remove the tea leaves) and onto the eggs and sugar, whisking all the time. Pour back into the pan and heat gently, stirring all the time, for about 5 minutes; the mixture will only thicken very slightly. Remove from the heat, pour into a clean bowl, cover with clingfilm gently pressing it onto the surface of the custard to prevent a skin from forming, then cool and chill completely.

3 Churn the chilled custard in an ice cream maker. Once ready, stir the chocolate evenly through the ice cream. If you don't have an ice cream maker, then you can freeze the custard in a plastic container, whisking well every half an hour or so, until evenly slushy, then whizz up in a food processor. Return to the freezer and freeze for a further 30 minutes then whizz again until smooth. Stir in the chopped chocolate or choc chips, then freeze until set.

4 While the ice cream is freezing, make the chocolate tuilles. Line a baking tray with baking parchment. Sift the flour with the cocoa powder into a bowl. In a separate bowl, beat the softened butter and icing sugar together until well blended.

5 Gradually beat the egg white into the butter and sugar mixture, then beat in the flour and cocoa a little at a time until you have a smooth mixture. Leave to rest for 30 minutes.

6 Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Place a teaspoonful of the mixture onto the prepared tray and using the back of the teaspoon, working in circular movements, spread the mix out thinly to an even circle about 8cm (3in) in diameter. Repeat two or three times, evenly spaced out. Only bake a few at a time as they harden very quickly once out of the oven.

7 Bake for about 5–6 minutes or until just set. Remove from the oven quickly and carefully. While the tuilles are still hot, roll quickly around the handle of a wooden spoon, drape over a rolling pin or leave until set. If the tuilles cool and harden before you have the chance to mould them, return the tray to the oven for a minute or so to soften then mould as above.

8 When ready to serve, remove the ice cream from the freezer to soften (about 10 minutes ahead of serving) then scoop into glasses and serve with the chocolate tuilles.

ICED TEA LOLLIES

Adults and kids alike will love making and eating these. Make real, all-natural ice lollies and slushies using good-quality whole-leaf teas and herbal infusions. Do experiment with your favourite tea but we've given you our favourites here.

RHUBARB AND GINGER CUSTARD TWO-TONE LOLLY

MAKES 12 LOLLIES

750ml (1 pint 6fl oz) water
4 rhubarb and ginger tea temples
50g (1¾oz) golden caster sugar
500ml (18fl oz) double cream
1 vanilla pod
12 lolly sticks

1 In a pan, pour in the measured water and bring to the boil. Pop in the tea temples, remove from the heat and leave to steep for 5 minutes. Squeeze out the tea temples and discard, then stir in 25g (1oz) of the sugar until it has dissolved. Leave to cool and then chill completely.

2 Pour the cream and the remaining sugar into a pan along with the vanilla pod and bring slowly to the boil, making sure the sugar dissolves. Cover and leave to cool completely, then remove the vanilla pod.

3 Place 12 x 75ml (3fl oz) ice lolly moulds in their holders in the freezer and pour the rhubarb tea mixture into each mould, about halfway up the mould, then freeze. (If you're feeling quirky, then prop the moulds at different angles to get a more interesting design once they're frozen.) When solid, pour the custard mixture on top (just below the top to allow for expansion) and freeze again. When they're half frozen (after about 1–2

hours), add a lolly stick to each and return to the freezer until completely solid.

SUPER FRUIT TEA LOLLIES WITH EDIBLE FLOWERS

MAKES 10 LOLLIES

750ml (1 pint 6fl oz) water
100g (3½oz) runny honey
2 tbsp super fruit (or hibiscus with mixed berries) whole leaf tea
juice of ½ lemon
edible flowers or petals (such as rose petals, small pansies or violas)
10 lolly sticks

1 In a pan, pour in the measured water and bring to the boil. Pour into a measuring jug, stir in the honey and tea leaves and leave to steep for 5 minutes, then strain and add the lemon juice. Leave to cool and then chill completely.

2 Pour a little liquid into each of 10 x 75ml (3fl oz) ice lolly moulds and add a couple of small edible flowers or petals.

3 Place the moulds in the freezer and freeze until solid then add more flowers and more tea and continue this freezing and topping up process to have suspended flowers throughout the lolly until all the tea mixture has been used (finish off just below the top of the moulds to allow for expansion). Be sure to add a lolly stick to each lolly at the last layer. Freeze until solid.

LEMON AND GINGER TEA LOLLIES

MAKES 10 LOLLIES/SERVES 8 AS A SLUSHY

750ml (1 pint 6fl oz) water
100g (3½oz) runny honey
6 tbsp lemon and ginger whole leaf tea
finely grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
10 lolly sticks (optional)

1 In a pan, pour in the measured water and bring to the boil. Pour into a measuring jug, stir in the honey, tea leaves and lemon zest and leave to steep for 5 minutes, then strain and add the lemon juice. Leave to cool and then chill completely.

2 Pour the liquid into each of 10 x 75ml (3fl oz) lolly moulds (just below the top of the moulds to allow for expansion) and pop in the freezer; freeze for 1–2 hours or until half set, then add a lolly stick to each mould and return to the freezer until solid.

3 If you want to make the slushy, then pour the mixture into a 25 x 15cm (10 x 6in) cake tin. Place in the freezer and freeze for about an hour or until ice crystals are forming around the rim and on the base of the tin. Scrape the mixture with a fork, combining well with any liquid, then return to the freezer. Repeat every 45 minutes or so until you see uniform crystals forming (it'll take about 3–4 hours in total). Spoon the flakes of slushy into pretty glasses to serve.

BLACKCURRANT TEA AND CHOCOLATE TRUFFLE ICE CREAM

There's something about the slightly smoky, potent and fruity flavour of blackcurrant tea that makes it the perfect complement to chocolate as in this recipe from David Lebovitz's book *The Perfect Scoop*. If you prefer more fragrant teas, then switch the blackcurrant tea leaves below to loose-leaf Earl Grey, Tung Ting oolong or super fruit (hibiscus with mixed berries) instead.

MAKES ABOUT 1 LITRE (1¾ PINTS)

FOR THE CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

140ml (4¾fl oz) double cream
3 tbsp corn or glucose syrup
170g (6oz) dark chocolate (45% minimum cocoa solids), chopped
1 tsp cognac, rum or other liqueur

FOR THE ICE CREAM

250ml (8½fl oz) whole milk
150g (5½oz) sugar
15g (½oz/10 tsp) blackcurrant whole leaf tea (or another tea, see intro)
500ml (18fl oz) double cream
5 large egg yolks

1 First, make the truffles. Heat the cream with the corn or glucose syrup in a small pan until it just begins to boil. Remove from the heat and add the chocolate, stirring until it's melted and the mixture is smooth. Mix in the alcohol. Scrape the mixture into a small bowl and freeze until firm, about 1 hour.

2 Line a dinner plate with clingfilm. Form little 2cm (¾in) truffles using 2 small spoons; you can, of course, make them bigger or smaller depending on what takes your fancy. Scoop up a teaspoonful of truffle mixture, then scrape it off with the other spoon onto the dinner plate. Repeat, using all the truffle mix. Freeze the truffles until ready to mix into the ice cream. These truffles can be refrigerated or frozen, well wrapped, for up to 2 weeks.

3 Now, for the ice cream. Warm the milk, sugar, tea leaves and half of the cream in a medium pan. Cover, remove from the heat and allow to steep at room temperature for 1 hour.

4 Rewarm the tea-infused milk. Pour the remaining cream into a large bowl and set a sieve on top. You'll need a large bowl of iced water too.

5 In a separate bowl, whisk the egg yolks. Slowly pour the warm mixture into the egg yolks, whisking constantly, then scrape the warmed egg yolks back into the pan.

6 Stir the mixture constantly over a medium heat with a heatproof spatula, scraping the bottom as you stir, until the mixture thickens and coats the spatula. Next, pour the custard through the sieve into the bowl of cream, pressing gently on the tea leaves to extract the maximum flavour from them; then discard the leaves. Stir the mixture until cool over an ice bath.

7 Chill the mixture thoroughly in the fridge, then freeze it in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. If you don't have an ice cream maker, freeze the mixture in a tub and be sure to get it out of the freezer and vigorously stir it at regular intervals (a whisk or sturdy spatula should do the trick) to avoid icy particles forming in the ice cream. It'll take 2–3 hours to freeze this way in the freezer.

8 When the ice cream is ready, fold three-quarters of the chocolate truffles into the ice cream as you remove it from the ice cream maker (or the freezer). If you wish, chop the chilled truffles into smaller pieces first. Roll the remaining chocolate truffles in cocoa powder to serve on the side.

SIPSMITH SUPER FRUIT SUNDOWNER

Our friends over at Sipsmith in London have come up with a fab new recipe idea, using tea! We recommend you make the most of the last summer days with a nice fruity tipple.

SERVES 1

2 orange wedges
2 lemon wedges
1 grapefruit wedge
40ml (1½fl oz) Sipsmith London Dry Gin
25ml (2/3fl oz) super fruit tea syrup (see below)
orange twist, to garnish

FOR THE SUPER FRUIT TEA SYRUP
500ml (18fl oz) water
500g (1lb 2oz) sugar
3–4 super fruit tea temples (or hibiscus with mixed berries whole leaf mesh tea bags)

1 First, make the tea syrup by combining the water and sugar in a pan. Bring to a simmer and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and add the tea temples or mesh bags, if using. Let the liquid rest until it reaches room temperature (about 30 minutes). Then, remove and discard the tea temples or mesh bags and transfer the liquid to a sterilised bottle and keep in the fridge until you're ready to use it.

2 Now, to make the drink. Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Squeeze orange and lemon wedges into it. Squeeze the grapefruit wedge and drop it into the shaker. Add the gin and tea syrup. Shake well. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass and garnish with an orange twist.

OLD WILLIAMSBURG MANDARIN TEA

This punch recipe from *The Williamsburg Art of Cookery* has been tweaked by food writer Lindy Wildsmith in her book *Artisan Drinks*, who says it makes a great after-dinner drink. Not strictly a liqueur, this tipple is for impatient liqueur-makers who want a drink to make and consume straightaway; although, it has to be said, if you can hold back it does improves with age.

MAKES 1 LITRE (1¾ PINTS)

juice and rind of 2 mandarins
225ml (7½fl oz) any strong tea, cooled
juice of 1 extra mandarin
juice and thinly pared rind of 1 lemon
125g (4½ oz) demerara or granulated sugar
300ml (10fl oz) top-quality rum

1 You'll need to source a couple of large bottles or Kilner jars to fit 1 litre (1¾ pints) of liquid in.

2 Start by scraping the pith off the back of the mandarin rind, put all the ingredients in the bottle or jar and seal. Shake well until the sugar dissolves. Leave overnight and strain through a sieve lined with muslin into a second bottle and drink when the spirit moves you.

3 Once made, this drink keeps for six months or more.

Variation: The original Williamsburg version used the thinly pared rind and juice of 2 lemons instead of mandarins; if you would like to try this version, then you may want to add a little more sugar, to taste.

ALMOND ICED TEA

This drink, created by mixologist Dre Masso for Beefeater 24's specific flavours, featured in Tom Sandham's book *World's Best Cocktails*. It uses Sencha tea but we think Matcha or another green tea could work well, too. The almond in the orgeat syrup complements the herbal notes of the green tea.

SERVES 1

ice cubes
50ml ((2fl oz) Beefeater 24 gin
3 tsp lemon juice
100ml (3½fl oz) chilled Sencha or Mao Feng green tea
4 tsp orgeat syrup (a sweet and fragrant syrup made from almonds, sugar and rose water or orange flower water)
slice of lemon

1 Pour all the ingredients into a glass over ice and stir. Garnish with a lemon wheel.

SPICED WINTER MULLED WINE

Spiced winter tea is like Christmas in a cup! Rooibos tea, cinnamon, cloves and orange peel – these flavours are pretty much everything you need to make a gorgeous mulled wine (well, almost everything you need), now where's that bottle of red…

MAKES 1 LITRE (1¾ PINTS)

5 spiced winter tea temples (or winter-spiced rooibos whole leaf mesh bags)
750ml (1 pint 6fl oz) good quality red wine
250ml (8½fl oz) water
4 tbsp sugar
½ orange, sliced
ginger biscuits, to serve (optional)

1 Snip the strings off the tea temples (or mesh bags, if using) and simply throw all of the ingredients into one big pan. Bring to just below boiling point, stirring occasionally.

2 Then, turn the heat right down and simmer for 10 minutes.

3 Serve warm, not too hot, as a delicious, warming drink on a cold day!

EARL GREY MARTINI WITH A LEMON SALT RIM

This martini is a classic, sophisticated kind of cocktail. Tea is often used by mixologists in cocktails – it is tasty and refreshing. Here's how to make your own at home.

SERVES 1

FOR THE EARL GREY SYRUP
4 tbsp water
2 tbsp Earl Grey strong whole leaf tea
3 tbsp caster sugar

FOR THE LEMON SALT RIM
finely grated zest of 2 lemons
50g (1¾oz) sea salt

FOR THE MARTINI
2 tbsp gin
1 tbsp lemon juice
ice cubes

FOR THE GARNISH
a long piece of lemon peel tied in a knot
dried borage flowers, picked from the Earl Grey strong tea leaves

1 First, make the Earl Grey syrup by heating the water in a small pan, stir in the tea leaves and sugar and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and leave to infuse for 10 minutes, then strain and chill.

2 Chill the martini glass. Meanwhile, whizz the lemon zest and salt until very fine and transfer to a shallow dish or saucer.

3 For each martini, dip the chilled glass into the lemon salt, then pour the gin, Earl Grey syrup and lemon juice into a cocktail shaker with ice, shake well, then strain into the glass and garnish with the lemon knot and sprinkle with the dried borage flowers.

MATCHARITA

This twist on the Margarita, from bartender Ago Perrone (of the Connaught Bar, Mayfair, London) and mixologist Tom Sandham from his book *World's Best Cocktails*, uses Matcha for a modern feel and adds a touch of Zen to the cocktail ceremony.

SERVES 1

50ml (2fl oz) Calle 23 tequila blanco
2 tsp orange curaçao
4 tsp unsalted yuzu juice
2 tsp maraschino liqueur
¼ tsp brewed Matcha tea
ice cubes
black salt and lemon slices, to garnish

1 Shake all the ingredients with ice and serve straight up in a glass (or a teacup) with lemon slices sprinkled with black salt.

SUPER-EASY, REAL, FRESHLY BREWED ICED TEAS

Forget those sugary, bottled iced teas you might have tried before. Freshly brewed iced teas made with real ingredients are just so much tastier and better for you. If you use good-quality ingredients, it takes just minutes for the flavours to come through. All teas taste great iced. You can use any black, green, white or oolong teas; or try fruit and herbal blends to make caffeine-free iced teas. If they contain real, whole pieces of fruit and herbs, they will give you lots and lots of flavour – it's a bit like making your own cordial. Below we share how to make our super-fresh iced tea. Oh and did we say, these are all very low calorie too? Hurrah!

SERVES 1

1 tea temple (or 2 tsp whole leaf tea)
250ml (8½fl oz) freshly boiled water
ice cubes
fresh fruit, to garnish
agave syrup (optional)

1 Take 1 tea temple (or whole leaf tea, if using) per person or per 250ml glass (or super-size the recipe to make a 1-litre/1¾-pint jug for sharing) and pour in freshly boiled water so that it just covers the tea temple or whole leaf tea (about 2.5cm/1in high). Allow to brew for 5 minutes then top with cold water and ice cubes; remember to strain out the tea leaves, if

using, before the next step or just strain before serving, it's up to you.

2 Next, add some fresh fruit for extra flavour and prettiness. Lemons and limes go well with traditional teas and red berries and passion fruit taste amazing with fruit and herbal teas.

3 You can take the tea temple out of the jug if you like, but we like to keep it in; it will continue to infuse and you can just keep topping up with ice.

4 If you like a sweeter tea, then add a squirt of agave nectar (an all-natural sweetener) along with the boiling water.

Our favourite ice tea combos:

The classic one – Darjeeling Earl Grey tea, a squeeze of fresh lemon juice and some lemon slices, for decoration

The elegant one – Mao Feng green tea, a handful of cucumber and lime slices and 3–4 mint leaves

The 'woah, that's a lot of flavour' one – liquorice and mint tea. Straight up. The peppermint leaves and the liquorice give you lots of natural flavour and sweetness.

The fruity one – super fruit tea (hibiscus with mixed berries), 2 handfuls of fresh berries, the fruit of 2 passion fruits. You'll never need to buy cordial again!

ICED TEA ON THE GO? If you give them a little more time, tea will infuse in cold water. So, add a tea temple (or whole leaf tea) to your 'on the go' water bottle before you leave home. The tea will infuse and you'll have an all-natural, delicious iced-tea flavoured-water throughout the day.

'KNOCK YOUR SOCKS OFF' TEASHAKES

Tea and milkshakes. Not exactly an obvious combination but, if you give these a go, we're sure you'll agree we're on to something! Because they contain real ingredients (pieces of fruit, spices, chocolate, caramel) quality whole leaf teas give you intense flavour and these teashakes will literally blow your socks off (that's a warning by the way).

SERVES 1

1 tea temple (or 2 tsp whole leaf tea (or more depending on how strong you like your flavour!))
100ml (3½fl oz) freshly boiled water
3 scoops good-quality vanilla ice cream

milk, to thin the consistency, if necessary

1 Pop a tea temple (or whole leaf tea, if using) into a cup and add the water. Leave to brew for 10 minutes; you could leave it longer if you like your flavours super-strong.

2 Once brewed, remove and discard the tea temple (or tea leaves, if using) and pour the liquid into a blender. Add 3 scoops of ice-cream and blend some more. If the mixture is too thick, then pour in a little skimmed or semi-skimmed milk and blend again. Drink. Smile.

As ever, we're big fans of experimenting, so do give this method a go with your favourite tea blend, but here are our four most favourite, tried and tested, 'Oh wow these are good' teashakes:

Chocolate and mint
Super fruit
Darjeeling Earl Grey
Rooibos crème caramel

MATCHA COCONUT TEASHAKE

We're always banging on about Matcha's super-power because it is, well, super. But Matcha also tastes amazing and sometimes we like to just indulge in that, so here is an extremely yummy and very creamy Matcha teashake recipe. Oh, and if you're not a fan of coconut then vanilla or white chocolate ice cream also are dreamy with Matcha.

SERVES 1

100ml (3½fl oz) skimmed milk
3 scoops coconut-flavoured ice cream
1 tsp Matcha

1 Put the milk and ice cream into a blender, then add the Matcha. Blend. Drink. Grin.

Top Tip Always add liquids into the blender before the Matcha powder as the Matcha has a tendency to stick to the sides of the blender otherwise.

Feeling extra indulgent? You could add:

some whipped cream
some chocolate sauce
some flaked almonds
a fresh mint leaf for fanciness.

ALL-NATURAL CHAI AND MATCHA LATTES

We talked earlier about chai tea, and how this spicy, milky and sweet black tea is made and drunk throughout India and its neighbours. The modern Western chai is often made using instant tea powders and/or spice-flavoured syrups, which can be cloyingly sweet and aren't very natural. We suggest you make your own chai lattes using whole leaf chai tea; you'll be amazed at the yummy, warming, spicy, indulgent flavour you'll get. And you'll be pleased to know, it takes just a few minutes.

CHAI LATTES

SERVES 1

1 chai tea temple (or 2 tsp chai whole leaf tea)
freshly boiled water, to cover
1 tsp demerara sugar
200–250ml (7–8½fl oz) skimmed or semi-skimmed milk (dependent on cup/glass size)
a sprinkle of ground cinnamon, to taste

1 Pop a chai tea temple (or whole leaf tea, if using) in a mug or latte glass and pour in freshly boiled water so that it just covers the tea temple (about 2.5cm/1in high) or tea leaves.

2 Add the sugar (or more/less to taste); if you prefer, use honey or agave syrup as sweeteners. Allow to brew for 3–5 minutes and then discard the tea. You can leave the tea temple in (it'll continue to infuse) or take it out if you prefer; if using whole leaf tea, do strain out the tea leaves.

3 In the meantime, make your hot, frothy milk. If you have a coffee machine with a steamer, you can use that. Otherwise, heat your milk in the microwave or on the hob and use a hand-held whisk to get it frothy and transfer to your mug or glass. Top with a sprinkle of cinnamon, to taste, and enjoy.

ALMOND MATCHA LATTE

SERVES 1

1 tsp Matcha
*a little not-quite-boiled water**
a squirt of agave nectar
a sprinkle of ground cinnamon and a grating of nutmeg
200–250ml (7–8½fl oz) almond milk (dependent on cup size)

1 In a mug, make a paste of the Matcha and water* using a hand-held whisk (the small electric kind works well). *Water temperature! Ideally, because Matcha is a green tea, the water you use shouldn't be boiling, it should be about 80°C (176°F). Unless you have a fancy kettle that boils at different temperatures, you're unlikely to be able to heat your water so precisely, so you should just click your kettle off before it boils or allow it to sit for a few minutes after it's boiled. That way, the temperature will be just right.

2 Next, add the agave nectar and spices.

3 Now, make your almond milk hot and frothy. If you have a coffee machine with a steamer, you can use that. Otherwise, heat your milk in the microwave or on the hob and use a hand-held whisk to get it nice and frothy.

4 Transfer the milk to your mug, mix with the Matcha paste, drink and enjoy the sprightliness that will come.

Why not try?

Swap ingredients around to make this work for you and your taste buds. Here are swaps we've tried:

- **cow's milk (semi-skimmed or skimmed) instead of almond milk**
- **coconut milk, oat milk, rice milk and other dairy-free alternatives all work well instead of almond milk**
- **½ teaspoon of vanilla extract, sugar or coconut sugar to sweeten, instead of the agave nectar.**

PREFER LOOSE? If you like to use loose-leaf tea then you could always brew some chai whole leaf tea. You'll need 2 teaspoons of chai tea and to brew it for 5 minutes in about 75ml (2¾fl oz) freshly boiled water. You'll then need to strain the leaves before adding your hot frothy milk.

SUPER-POWER MATCHA SMOOTHIES

We have talked a fair bit about all the nutrients that super-power Matcha green tea contains. The fact that it's a powder makes it a great thing to add to smoothies to make them extra healthy. So, here are four Matcha smoothies for you to try – one of them was put together for us by our friends at Jamie Oliver's Fifteen Restaurant in Old Street, London. Enjoy and feel virtuous in your healthiness!

All of these smoothies make 1 serving. You just need to put the ingredients into a blender; we find it's best to put the Matcha in last. Then you simply blend, pour into a glass and enjoy.

MATCHA SMOOTHIE

This super-delicious smoothie was created by Fifteen Restaurant, London. It's yummy and creamy (thanks banana) yet light and fresh (thanks apple and mint), we love this smoothie at any time of the day.

½ apple
¼ stick celery
2 sprigs mint
½ banana
½ pear
½ tsp Matcha

DAIRY-FREE PROTEIN SMOOTHIE

Drink this sweet and creamy smoothie after exercise to help your body recover. Want to share the secret to an unbelievably creamy taste and texture in any dairy-free smoothie? Well, the answer in short is avocado! You'll be hooked after you try it. And, bonus, it tastes amazing! You could use coconut milk instead if you prefer. The fruit and Matcha offer up myriad nutrients and the hemp seeds are packed with protein – just what your body needs.

400ml (13½fl oz) almond milk
½ avocado
a handful of strawberries
a handful of raspberries
1 small mango
1 tsp hemp seeds
½ tsp Matcha

MATGHA BREAKFAST BOOSTER

As the name suggests, this smoothie is great for breakfast. The oats and Matcha give you slow-release energy and the nut butter is a useful source of protein. If you're not a big fan of super-sweet flavours in the morning, then you'll love this as the spinach and Matcha offer a mild, grassy taste, which we love. Feel free to substitute the whole milk for any dairy-free version if you fancy.

400ml (13½fl oz) whole milk
1 tbsp honey
a handful of oats
1 tbsp cashew or almond butter
a handful of spinach leaves
1 banana
½ tsp Matcha

PRE-EXERCISE ENERGISER

Want something sweet and earthy but light and easy to digest before a run or gym session? Then reach for a glass of this powerful smoothie. Beetroot juice is famed for its energising properties and here we've combined it with Matcha and chia seeds, which have been shown to increase endurance.

100ml (3½fl oz) beetroot juice
300ml (10fl oz) coconut water 1 banana
a handful of blueberries
1 tbsp chia seeds
½ tsp Matcha

Meet our teas

We make a big thing about using quality real tea – whole leaf tea, whole leaf herbs and whole flowers. All the real ingredients are handled gently and with love, to maintain every drop of precious flavour.

EVERYDAY BREW

This is our signature blend – our daily cuppa, our builder's brew, our Rosy Lee. Call it what you want but our everyday brew is the ultimate British favourite. We've blended three top-quality whole leaf black teas – Assam, Ceylon and a lovely Rwandan – to give a balanced, malty, zesty alliance and the most perfect cup of tea.
How does it taste? A gutsy tea full of flavour. We describe it as malty, zesty and rich in strength.

DARJEELING EARL GREY

Most of the Earl Greys you find use a poor-quality black tea base from China, which is like palming yourself off as landed gentry when all you own is a Barbour jacket. In this blend we use a Darjeeling tea – the best of the best from the foothills of the Himalayas. These whole Darjeeling leaves are blended with zesty, citrus bergamot and lime flavours from the Mediterranean to create something altogether more elegant, or so we think.
How does it taste? The exotic, floral tones of Darjeeling tea are balanced with the sunny citrus taste of bergamot.

EARL GREY STRONG

Do you like your Earl Grey to come with some real oomph and wallop? Well, this is the one for you. We've blended some powerful Assam and Rwandan with the more delicate Ceylon and Darjeeling to give the perfect strong tea base to compliment the zesty bergamot. Maybe more of a Duke than a lowly Earl, what do you think?
How does it taste? Strong black tea with delicate Darjeeling and fancy bergamot. An Earl Grey but with wallop!

CHAI TEA

Every vendor, in every city, in every region of India, offers their own version of chai masala, the aromatic, spiced, milky tea that has been the Indian drink of choice for hundreds of years. Here's our version: a rich, malty Assam tea blended with cardamom pods, cinnamon, ginger and vanilla. A satisfying, yummy drink that captures the vibrancy and colour of India in a cup.
How does it taste? A gutsy Assam tea and an exotic mix of whole spices for a true taste of India.

CHILLI CHAI

This blend is a twist on our traditional chai – the same authentic Indian recipe but with a little extra kick from little flakes of real chilli. A gutsy Assam blended with whole cardamom pods, real chunks of ginger, cinnamon, vanilla and not forgetting those spicy chilli bits. This chai is for those of you who don't order korma and plain naan from your local curry house.
How does it taste? A gutsy Assam tea with exotic spices and an extra fiery kick at the end.

CHOCOLATE FLAKE TEA

Choccie biscuits dunked in tea – a match made in heaven. Strong tea and a hint of dark, rich, chocolate – this blend gives you both. A partnership so very perfect, it belongs between the pages of a Mills and Boon novel.
How does it taste? Not sickly sweet hot chocolate, but a far more sophisticated tea and chocolate combo.

GREEN TEA WITH MINT

While haggling in the souks of Morocco, we discovered tea with mint and sugar – lots and lots of sugar! The lovely people of Morocco have their tea super-sweet, this is partly because the Gunpowder green tea they drink can sometimes be a little harsh – the sweetness melts that away. After a bit of trial and error, we opted for a green tea called Chunmee or, as we prefer, Precious Eyebrows, which is a more delicate tea. Better to change the base tea than your teeth, we reckon!
How does it taste? A delicate green tea with a punchy mint taste.

JASMINE PEARLS

These tea temples house lovely little pearls of hand-rolled green tea tips which have been delicately infused with pure jasmine flowers. The leaves are just allowed to rest among the flowers to pick up their floral scent – jasmine tea doesn't get any purer than this. Once you cover with water, the leaves will unfurl from the hand-rolled pearl to reveal a whole leaf and a bud – surprisingly hypnotic viewing we think! These particular pearls are often called 'dragon phoenix pearls' – that's because the tea bushes on the hillside look like a dragon coming out of the water. Although I've seen these bushes climbing the hillside I've yet to see a dragon getting out of a bath, so I can't vouch for the accuracy of this claim, unfortunately!
How does it taste? Delicate green tea with a light, floral, refreshing, natural jasmine taste.

MAO FENG GREEN TEA

If you enjoy the benefits of green tea but hate the taste, this is perfect for you. It has a delicate natural flavour of summer air, peaches and apricots and, unlike most murky brown standard green teas, this one turns a clear, pale green when infused.
How does it taste? A delicate natural taste of fresh summer air, peaches and apricots.

ORGANIC MATCHA

Matcha is a super-hero among teas. A super-concentrated 100% green tea powder from Japan. When drinking Matcha you're swallowing and ingesting every little bit of green tea goodness. A good source of natural green tea flavonoids (catechins), amino acid L-theanine and beta carotene, Matcha has been drunk for centuries in Japan where it is used in the traditional tea ceremony. teapigs organic Matcha is premium grade Matcha from the Nishio region in Japan. The tea bushes are grown under lots of shade, which maximises the chlorophyll content then hand-picked to ensure only the juicy young leaves and bud are plucked. The stems and veins are removed after which the fleshy leaves are ground by granite stones to a fine powder. This is then immediately vacuum packed and sealed to ensure maximum nutritional value is retained. That's why we call it super-power green tea.
How does it taste? With water, like a super-power green tea brew. With juice/milk, a hint of delicate green tea flavour.

POPCORN TEA

Not one we've made up, we promise! Back in the day, green tea was rather expensive and too pricey for your average Japanese peasant, so to make it go further they'd mix it with grains of toasted rice. From such humble beginnings has grown a tea that, in today's Japan, is celebrated in its own right as Genmaicha tea – or, to its friends, Popcorn tea. The British equivalent would probably be something like bubble and squeak, although obviously not recommended for use in teapots.
How does it taste? Green tea with a popcorny, almost nutty undertone.

SILVER TIPS WHITE TEA

For two hours every morning, for a very special two weeks of the year, the tea pluckers of the Chinese Fujian province where white tea is grown, are in the fields at the crack of dawn to catch the early morning shoots. Once plucked, these are simply left in the sun to naturally wither and sent to people who appreciate this kind of thing (that'll be us at teapigs then). Possibly the most exclusive tea we stock.

How does it taste? Refreshing, light and aromatic – think peaches and apricots. Very pure. We have chosen to bring you genuine white rather than green tea masquerading as white tea. If your white tea looks green in the cup, then it is green tea – watch out for fakes.

TUNG TING OOLONG TEA

Oolong tea, sometimes known as blue tea, is part fermented and this one – Tung Ting – takes its name from the mountainous region in Taiwan where it is grown. This area is regarded by those who know about this kind of thing – us included – as one of the finest around. We're very proud to be able to offer a genuine oolong tea, as these teas are mostly sold to the local Taiwanese at hundreds of dollars – a bit more pricey than your average cuppa, but worth every penny.

How does it taste? Oolong tea sits between green and black. This tea delivers the strength of a black tea, with the aromatic, flowery flavours of a green tea. Green tea is for now, but we reckon Tung Ting will be the next big thing.

APPLE AND CINNAMON

Whether its in grandma's pie, giant muffins or American pancakes nothing beats the flavour of sweet juicy apple with punchy cinnamon spice. It's the perfect combination for a lovely fruity and spicy tea. Thanks go to the team at Olive and Bean, one of our lovely stockists in Newcastle, who suggested this blend of apple and cinnamon.

How does it taste? Like apple pie.

CHAMOMILE FLOWERS

It's long been known that the best chamomile tea comes from brewing the whole flowers. So guess what we sell? That's right, only the whole flowers of the Croatian chamomile bush. You may have noticed most other chamomile teas are made from dusty little bits – this is the crushed flowers, which, in our view, is a plain nasty thing to do. The chamomile flower is celebrated for its many benefits, which include calming and aiding sleep.

How does it taste? A beautiful yellow cup that gives way to a sweet, surprisingly juicy flavour of chamomile.

CHOCOLATE AND MINT

A classic combination. Mint choc chip ice cream, after dinner minty dark chocolates, a super-retro pairing. We have put together our finest peppermint leaves and added yummy chocolate pieces to deliver a slightly indulgent drink with 3 calories per cup.

How does it taste? Like a dark chocolate mint, that you'd have after 8pm.

FENNEL AND LIQUORICE

Fennel has an anise-like aroma and is used widely around the world for both culinary and health purposes. Importantly to us it tastes yummy and is particularly delicious with its partner in crime – liquorice. A naturally caffeine-free, sweet and savoury aromatic tea.

How does it taste? Super, super-cleansing.

HONEYBUSH AND ROOIBOS

A scrumptious blend of slightly sweet honeybush with the nutty overtones of rooibos (Africaans for 'red bush'), two native South African shrubs. They grow only in the Cederberg mountain region of South Africa and are harvested and prepared in much the same way to regular tea. Naturally caffeine-free, this blend is a great alternative to regular tea.

How does it taste? An earthy, mahogany-coloured nectar that gives way to a subtly nutty flavour.

LEMON AND GINGER

Close the door to the wind and rain and brew up this all-natural, gingery, lemony brew to sweep you away to a British summer's day. Think home-made lemonade, traditional ginger beer, croquet and morris dancers (ok, perhaps a step too far), it's simply summer in a cup. There is no match for the ginger kick and refreshing lemon in this infusion.
How does it taste? A light, refreshing burst of citrus with the subtle warmth of ginger.

PEPPERMINT LEAVES

As with our other teas, we insist that our herbal ones always use the whole leaf or flower. We think the leaf should be worshipped, not crushed. Because we use whole peppermint leaves, you'll find the flavour of this blend much stronger and fresher than regular dusty paper teabags. Peppermint is reputed to be great for soothing sore tummies and helping us to keep a healthy digestive systems.
How does it taste? Very minty, very refreshing, very light.

PURE LEMONGRASS

Lemongrass is drunk all over Asia after meals for pure refreshment. Originally from Malaysia it flourishes in any humid clime. Commonly known as an ingredient in Thai cooking it also makes a wonderful, and unexpectedly, sweet, lime and citrus drink.
How does it taste? An unexpectedly sweet lime and citrus drink.

RHUBARB AND GINGER

Crumble in a cup! Give us rhubarb and give us ginger, then we put them in a tea temple and here we have it; a super-wow zesty rhubarb with a sweet ginger kick. Rhubarb lovers, this is for you.
How does it taste? Clean, pure and zingy.

ROOIBOS CRÈME CARAMEL

Scrumptious, this tea has it all – rooibos is naturally caffeine-free, contains flavonoids and is as hydrating as water. The chunks of caramel make it a sweet, rich, comforting drink to rival any dessert but a cup contains only 2 calories. We can't guarantee all temples contain caramel chunks but if you do get all 15 full of chunks, you've really hit the sweetness jackpot!
How does it taste? Woody, nutty rooibos balanced with sweet crème caramel for an indulgent, smooth, rich drink.

SPICED WINTER RED TEA

We think we've captured the best bits of winter with this one – mulled wine, mistletoe, winter coats and rosy cheeks. Log fires, happy cats and old movies on the telly. Tea and warming spices. This tea also makes a yummy wintery caffeine-free latte – orange, cloves and cinnamon on a red tea base, perfect on a crisp, frosty morning.
How does it taste? Warming winter spices combined with a delicious rooibos tea base.

SUPER FRUIT

We can't get enough fruit these days and this naturally caffeine-free herbal tea is literally bursting with berries! What's more, the invigorating hibiscus flower base not only gives this tea a lovely deep red hue but a punchy and slightly tart taste.
How does it taste? Super and fruity – this cheeky drink is a little tart!

SWEET GINGER

Big in ginger flavour, loaded with sweetness and full of spice. This brew is loud, loud. Just like some other well-known folk with ginger connections.
How does it taste? Ginger, then cinnamon, then sweet.

YERBA MATE

If you've ever travelled to South America and particularly Argentina you'll see yerba mate (pronounced yerba mah-tey) being drunk by nearly everyone. Literally. Drunk to help maintain a healthy weight and for its stimulating properties, our yerba tastes a little like a smoky green tea.

How does it taste? A bit like a smoky green tea. Could this be the new lapsang souchong?

Where to drink our teas

Want to sip a cup of teapigs tea wherever you are in the world? Then, no fear as we've got a lot of countries covered. So, just pop into one of our lovely stockists, see below, and enjoy a lovely cup of tea.

(Note: information correct at time of publication.)

AUSTRIA
Coffee Pirates
Spitalgasse 17, 1090 Wien
www.kaffeepiraten.at

Feinkoch
Theobaldgasse 14,
1060 Wien
www.feinkoch.org

Motto am Fluss
Schwedenpl. 2, 1010 Wien
www.motto.at/mottoamfluss

AUSTRALIA
Holy Goat Coffee
32 Geebung Drive, Port
Macquairie, NSW 2444
www.holygoatcoffee.com.au

Hudsons Coffee
Locations nationwide
www.hudsonscoffee.com.au

Cooper's Fish and Chips
409 The Esplanade, Manly,
QLD 4179
www.facebook.com/pages/Coopers-Fish-Chips-and-Cafe/128719077203662

BELGIUM
Bistro Entrez
Hoogboomsteenweg 183,
2950 Kapellen
www.entrez.be

Bon Appétit
Theofiel van
Cauwenberghslei 115,
2900 Schoten
www.facebook.com/boonappetit

Bon Appetit
Stationsstraat 88,
3150 Haacht
www.bon-appetit.be

Café Refuge
Zimmerplein 12, 2500 Lier
www.caferefugelier.be

CHINA (INCLUDING HONG KONG)
www.teapigs.hk

Blissful Carrot
85, 79 Rua Direita Carlos
Eugenio, Macau
www.facebook.com/blissfulcarrot

Cha Cha Wan
206 Hollywood Road,
Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
www.facebook.com/chachawan.hongkong?fref=ts

Mr. Choi
Dessert Store
www.thechois.cc

Social & Co
Café/Bar
www.socialandco.com/cn

Village Bakery
Shop 2, G/F, Lucky Court,
16 Mui Wo Ferry Pier Road,
Mui Wo
www.facebook.com/villagebakerylantau

YATA Limited
Various locations across
Hong Kong
www.yata.hk

DENMARK
Interflora
Locations nationwide
www.interflora.dk

Strandvejsristeriet
Kronborg 12A,
3000 Helsingør
www.strandvejsristeriet.dk

Street Coffee
Brammersgade 15,
8000 Århus
www.streetcoffee.dk

FINLAND
Cafe & Bar 21
Rovakatu 21,
96200 Rovaniemi
www.cafebar21.fi

Lapin Herkkutupa
Valtatie 37, 99100 Kittilä
www.herkkutupa.com

Malins Foodie Living
Kronvikintie 4,
65410 Vaasa
www.foodieliving.fi

Mandragora
Rovakatu 31,
96200 Rovaniemi
www.mandragora.fi

Oikaraisen Taukopaikka
Koskenkyläntie 1595,
97610 Oikarainen
www.oikaraisentaukopaikka.fi

FRANCE
www.teapigs.fr

Cosí Diva
54 rue de Seine,
75006 Paris

English Country Kitchen
4 rue Castalnau d'Auros,
33000 Bordeaux
www.englishcountrykitchen.fr

Le Petit Flottes
2 rue Cambon, 75001 Paris
www.lepetitflottes.com

Royal Mougins Spa
424 avenue du Roi,
06250 Mougins
www.royalmougins.fr

This is London
8 avenue Jean Lebas,
59100 Roubaix
www.facebook.com/pages/This-is-London-British-food-and-atmosphere/264010683788231?fref=ts

GERMANY
www.teapigs.de

Foodies
Amalienstrasse 87,
Maxvorstadt,
80799 München
www.foodies.de

N&J Food
König Adolf Platz 13,
65510 Idstein
www.nandj-food.de

GREECE
Bookabar
Agiou Konstantinou 50,
Marousi, Athens
www.bookabar.gr

Coffeebike
Pikérmion, Attiki,
Athens
www.coffeebike.net

Graffito
34 Solonos St, Athens
Centre, Kolonaki,
Athens
www.graffito.gr

Nutsural
Agiou Georgiou 12,
Chalandri 152 34,
Athens

ICELAND
GOTT restaurant
Bárustíg 11, 900
Vestmannaeyjar
www.facebook.com/gottrestaurant

Lifandi markaður
Borgartúni 24, 105
Reykjavik
www.lifandimarkadur.is

Mosfellsbakari
Háaleltisbraut 58–60,
108 Reykjavik
www.mosfellsbakari.is

Sushibarinn
Suðurlandsbraut 10,
108 Reykjavik
www.sushibarinn.is

IRELAND
Cinnamon
83–87 Main Street,
Ranelagh, Dublin 6
www.cinnamon.ie

Jo’s Café
55 Main St, Kinsale,
Co Cork
www.joskinsale.com

Market Lane Cafe Ltd
5–6 Oliver Plunkett St,
Cork City
www.marketlane.ie

The Spotty Cup Tearoom
Golden Island, Athlone,
Roscommon
www.thespottycuptearooms.ie

Urbun Café
Bray Road, Co. Dun
Laoghaire-Rathdown, Dublin

ITALY
Castroni Ottaviano
Via Ottaviano 55,
00192, Roma
www.castroniottaviano.com

La Teiera Eclettica
Via Melzo 30, 20129 Milano
www.teieraeclettica.it

Panificio Bonci
Via Trionfale 36, 00195 Roma

Salumeria Roscioli
Via dei Guibbonari 21,
00186 Roma
www.salumeriaroscioli.com

JAPAN
café 104.5
Waterras Tower 2F,
2-101 Kandaawaji-cho,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
www.cafe1045.com

Chez Kentaro (French Bistro)
247-0056 Kanagawa-ken,
Kamakura-shi, Ōfuna,
1 Chome-12-18
www.chezkentaro.com

Nakatani (pâtisserie)
6 Chome-6-27 Uehonmachi
Tennōji-ku, Ōsaka-shi,
Ōsaka-fu 543-0001
www.nakatanitei.com

Pâtisserie de Joel
Yao, Osaka
www.e-sakon.co.jp

Rose Bakery Isetan Shinjuku
Isetan Shinjuku, 3F,
3-14-1 Shinjuku,
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo
www.rosebakery.jp

MALAYSIA
HotShots Coffee & Tea
A2-UG1-07 Solaris Dutamas,
Jalan Dutamas 1, 50480
Kuala Lumpur
www.hotshotscoffeeandtea.com

NIGERIA
Hans and Rene
2 Abimbola Awoniyi Close,
Victoria Island, Lagos

NORWAY
Brødbakerne

Various locations
www.brodbakerne.no

Huset Glass&Interiør
Storgata 8, 8370 Leknes
www.facebook.com/Husetglass

Jordbær Pikene
Various locations
www.jordbarpikene.no

POLAND
Barometr A2
Rynek 24, Bielsko-Biała
www.barometrcoffeeandbar.pl

Grill House
Perłowa 2, Kołobrzeg
www.grillhouse.pl

Kurhaus
Aldony 6, Wrzeszcz, Gdansk
www.facebook.com/kurhaus

Landschaft
Gimnazjalna 6, Bydgoszcz
www.facebook.com/landschaft.store

Ministerstwo
Marszałkowska 27/35,
Warszawa
www.ministerstwokawy.pl

RUSSIA AND KAZAKHSTAN
Healthy Food Cafés
Various locations
www.h-food.ru

Kuptsov Eliseevskiy
Saint Petersburg
www.kupetzeliseevs.ru

Standart Vkusa
Udaltsova 40A
www.standartvkusa.ru

Tabris Retail
Various locations
Krasnoyarsk
www.tabris.ru

Tsvetnoy Central Market
15 Building 1, Tsvetnoy
Boulevard, Moscow 127051
www.tsvetnoy.com

Zvezdniy Retail
Posadskaya ul.,
24 Yekaterinburg,
Sverdlovskaya oblast’,
620102
www.uralstar.ru

SINGAPORE

Baker & Cook
77 Hillcrest Road,
Greenwood,
Singapore 288951
www.bakerandcook.biz

Cedele
252 North Bridge Road, 03-28A Raffles City Shopping
Centre, Singapore 179103
www.cedelegroup.com

SOUTH AFRICA

Abalone House & Spa
3 Kriedoring Street,
Paternoster 7381
www.abalonehouse.co.za

The Blue Crane & The Butterfly
146 Dorp Street,
Stellenbosch 7600
www.bluecranecoffee.co.za

Ma Mère
The Old Biscuit Mill, 375
Albert Road, Woodstock,
Cape Town 7915
www.mamere.co.za

Martins Bakery
43 Main Rd, Wynberg,
Cape Town 7800
www.martinsbakery.co.za

SPAIN

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17600 Figueres
www.marcjoli.com

Brunch & Cake
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08007 Barcelona
www.cupcakesbarcelona.com

Ensucrats
Calle Sant Pere 18,
43850 Cambrils
www.ensucrats.com

La Botiga del Café
Rambla Nova 88,
43001 Tarragona
www.labotigadelcafe.com

Passion Café Ibiza
Passeig Joan Carles
Primero 23, Edificio
Mediterraneo, 07800 Ibiza
www.passion-ibiza.com

SWEDEN
Blueberry
Sibyllegatan 15,
114 42 Stockholm
www.blueberrylifestyle.se

Hovås Kallbadhus
Fjordvägen 51,
436 50 Hovås
www.hovaskallbadhus.se.loopiadns.com

Kafé Magasinet
Tredje Långgatan 9,
413 03 Goteborg
www.kafemagasinet.se

Tacos & Tequila
Tredje Långgatan 9,
413 03 Goteborg
www.tacosandtequila.se

Taverna Brillo
Sturengatan 6,
Humlegårdsgatan 19,
114 35 Stockholm
www.tavernabrillo.se

SWITZERLAND
Blackbird Café
Cheneau de Bourg 1,
1003 Lausanne
www.blackbirdcafe.ch

Changemaker
Various locations
www.changemaker.ch

UK
www.teapigs.co.uk

Busy Bee Garden Centre
Brading Road, Ryde,
Isle of Wight PO33 1QG
www.busybeegardencentre.co.uk

Macbeans
2 Little Belmont Street,
Aberdeen AB10 1JG
www.macbeans.com

Milk and Sugar
10 Windsor Place,
Cardiff CF10 3BX
www.milkandsugarplease.com

Moksha Caffé
4–5 York Place. Brighton
BN1 4GY
www.mokshacaffe.com

Jersey Pottery Restaurant

5 La Colomberie, St Helier,
Jersey JE2 4QB
www.jerseypotterycafes.com

Olive and Bean
17–19 Clayton Street,
Newcastle NE1 5PN
www.oliveandbean.co.uk

Rumpus Cosie
12 Derry's Cross,
Plymouth PL1 2TE
www.radiantspace.org.uk/rumpus-cosy

Shetland Arts Centre
Mareel, Lerwick,
Shetland Isles ZE1 0WQ
www.mareel.org

The Old Pier Tearoom
Lamlash, Brodick,
Isle of Aaran KA27 8JN

The Swan at the Globe
21 New Globe Walk,
London SE1 9DT
www.swanlondon.co.uk

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Ripe Fresh Farm Shop
A Street, Al Manara Street,
Near Al Manar Mosque,
Near Al Wasl Street, Dubai
www.ripeme.com

USA
www.teapigs.com

Astoria Coffee Shop
30-04 30th Street, Astoria,
NY 11102
www.astoriacoffeeny.com

Central Market
Various locations
across Texas
www.centralmarket.com

Chelsea Market Baskets
75 Ninth Avenue,
New York NY 10011
www.chelseamarketbasket.com

Fairway Market
Various locations in New York,
New Jersey and Connecticut
www.fairwaymarket.com

Forager's City Grocer
56 Adams Street, Brooklyn,
NY 11201
www.foragersmarket.com

Monsieur Marcel
1260 3rd Street Promenade,
Santa Monica CA 90404
www.mrmarcel.com

Mrs Green's Natural Market
Various locations
www.mrsgreens.com

The Dandelion
124 S 18th Street,
Philadelphia
PA 19103
www.thedandelionpub.com

The Fresh Market
Locations nationwide
www.thefreshmarket.com

The Pasta Shop
Rockridge Market Hall,
5655 College Avenue,
Suite 201, Oakland,
CA 94618
www.rockridgemarkethall.com

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Some recipes recommend particular blends of tea; if these are difficult to find, you can make the recipes using other whole leaf mesh tea bags or loose-leaf tea (straining will be necessary), but you may need to experiment with the amount as the strength of flavour may well vary.

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